



7

Supana Onikage

Illustrator: Youta

Lazy Dungeon Master

VISIT...

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An anime-style illustration of a young girl with long, dark purple hair and small, light-colored horns. She is wearing a pink and white outfit with a large white bow at the collar. She is lying down, looking towards the viewer with a slight smile. A large, pink, baby-like body is visible next to her. In the background, there is a golden frame with hanging ornaments, including a star and a crescent moon. A baby bottle is visible in the bottom right corner.

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Mysterious Girl



"GOOD BOY,
GOOOOD BOY."

ON THAT DAY, AN ANGEL
DESCENDED UPON THE SLUMS...



Dog Loli
NIKU

Archduke's Daughter
MAIDORE

"UNDERSTOOD."

"KURO,
CARRY THE
LITTLE LADY
FOR ME."

Dungeon Master
KEIMA MASUDA

"UHA?!"



"INDEED!
I AM THE...
TSIA
DUNGEON
CORE!"

Crossdressing Dungeon Core

CORE219

ESCAPE FROM THE
ENEMY DUNGEON!

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Prologue

There was a grand ivory villa located within the Laverio Empire's capital city. Inside said villa was a garden. That was where Dungeon Core 89, also known as Haku Laverio, was spending her lazy evening. She sat on an ivory chair in front of an ivory table, both spotless despite their location outside. There was a butler serving black tea with a mithril tea set. The scene could be described as that of a dignified painting.

Haku took a sip from her cup of perfectly warm tea. A wonderful flavor spread through her mouth, befitting that of the Holy Kingdom's highest quality tea. That kingdom's Church of Lux was quite the thorn in her side, but they had an obsession with luxury goods that paid off.

...With her sip completed, Haku let out a light sigh.

"Why must I work daily with no rest? I haven't had the time to go play with Rokuko for quite a while."

"I believe you know the answer to that." Haku's murmur was answered immediately by her butler aide, the Succubus Chloe.

"Yes, I suppose. Now that the dust has settled I must question whether it was necessary to make not just Keima a B-Rank adventurer, but his slaves as well."

It all began several months ago, during the Triple Threat Dungeon Battle initiated by Father. Haku had ignored customs, precedence, and the law when issuing those B-Rank adventurer cards and allowing Keima's party to live in her villa for about a month. The grievances caused by her actions led to a snowballing of built-up problems which turned into an avalanche—of work. She was now stuck handling her normal work while simultaneously cleaning up the mess she made.

"Nonetheless, those days I spent with Rokuko were heaven, to say the least... Haaah..." Haku sighed yet again. But this time, it was a blissful sigh born from recalling happy memories.

Imagine a life where your cute little sister lived in your own home and your own room. For a month, Haku had lived in a heaven where she could meet Rokuko immediately after finishing her work. A paradise of endless fun, endless tea parties, and endless playing around, all with her beloved little sister.

Just remembering it filled her with such bliss that her body tingled and her heart throbbed. She could only survive her current overworked state by remembering that it was the result of spending those days with Rokuko.

“By the way, Lady Haku. Two letters have arrived for you.”

“Oh my, I wonder from which nobles. What a pain.”

“They arrived through the [Ivory Secret Spot].”

“Say that first!”

Chloe held out two letters. The [Ivory Secret Spot] formed a direct connection to Rokuko’s dungeon the [Cave of Greed], which meant letters from it were either from Rokuko or Keima. Since there were two letters this time, it was probably one from each. This turned out to be exactly the case.

“Which will you read first?”

“...I shall leave the best for last, which means starting with Keima.”

Chloe held out a small letter opener which Haku used to open Keima’s letter.

I have established the Beddhist Church. It is a religion that worships sleep and peace.

“Oh, the Beddhist Church, hm? It’s good that he chose to report this to me.” She had already heard of Beddhism through her spies in Goren. Beddhism was not competing with the Ivory Church for followers, and thus there was no need for her to crush it while it was young. Wataru had joined it as well, so a friendly relationship made the most sense.

Continuing on... Some insane person called Leona attacked us. She’s a Hero and also Dungeon Core Number 4. I somehow managed to drive her away.

“What?! Leona attacked them?! Is Rokuko safe?! Well, I suppose she must be, since she sent us a letter...” Leona. A creature born from the fusion of a Dungeon Core and a Hero. Without a doubt, she was Haku’s worst enemy.

Leona was the source of countless headaches for Haku. Reason being, she at times had to help her as a Dungeon Core. Otherwise, she would be attacked herself, in more ways than one. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement most of the time, but still. Headaches.

On top of that, if Haku used weapons created through Leona's {Ultra Alchemy} to destroy other Cores, the offering points (experience points?) went to Leona instead. Leona's weapons were always high quality Magic Blades, and as a collector, Haku would have loved to buy them all for herself. If only Leona wasn't involved.

"...Dungeon Core 4 and a Hero. You revealed that much about yourself to him, Leona..." Haku, of course, knew that about her. But Leona generally kept details about herself hidden; in fact, Haku had been sworn to silence about them. That Leona had told Keima so much about herself meant that she no longer found the need to hide her identity. She may have finished preparing for something. *Hmm*, Haku thought. *I need to strengthen my defenses.*

"But still, she infiltrated his church as a Beddhist nun? As always, I find it hard to understand what goes on in Leona's head." What advantages were there to her disguising herself as a nun? Were there any at all? Regardless, it wasn't worth thinking about. She was probably just playing cruel jokes like she always did.

"What do you think, Chloe? Do you know why she would do that?"

"I'm more concerned with his claim that he fought back Chaos. She is unmistakably a god, and he survived her attack?"

"My, my. Keima defeated me, remember? This should not be surprising."

"...That is true." Haku had once before challenged Keima to a Dungeon Battle and lost. She was both a Dungeon Core and the Ivory Goddess who had obtained true divinity through the worship of adventurers. In short, Leona being a god did not mean that Keima would necessarily lose to her. "Goodness gracious. If luck will have it, I would love to kill the absolute shit out of Leona one day... Haaah," sighed Haku, having said the same thing for about five hundred years straight. She had still been a weak young Dungeon Core when she first met Leona. They were as fierce of enemies as you could imagine.

Regardless, that was all that Keima's business-like letter contained. She appreciated that he kept his reports simple and to the point, although there were quite a few things he hadn't mentioned that her spies had.

"I believe I will cheer up by reading Rokuko's letter. Ahaha, I wonder what it could be about?" Haku opened Rokuko's letter. Unlike with Keima's letter, her mood swelled with anticipation. Naturally. It was a letter from her beloved little sister.

How are things, Haku? You haven't come to visit me in a long time, I miss you.

"Oh, I miss you too...! Chloe, do I have the time to take tomorrow off?"

"Not a chance. Do you need me to explain why?"

"A simple no would have sufficed." She continued reading the letter.

I'm passing the time working as a nun in the Beddhist Church that Keima thought up.

"...Hmm, it seems that sweet little Rokuko has become a nun." Rokuko, a nun. Relaxing around the church, doing simple prayers... and wearing nun outfits. A splendid nun of Beddhism... How spectacular.

"....."

"It won't happen."

"I don't believe I've said anything yet," replied Haku archly.

"It is written on your face that you are considering joining the Beddhist Church. That would send the entire Ivory Church into panic, so please make do with a mere friendship."

"Oh, fine." Haku gave up on joining the church at Chloe's stern warning. However, thinking about it, that way Haku would be the only god in either of the churches. As a nun, Rokuko would have to show her the utmost pious loyalty. That wouldn't be too bad.

"Well, enough of that. Let's see what's next." She continued reading the letter while sipping tea out of her mithril teacup.

Also, I might make a baby with Keima. I'll show our baby to you if it happens!

...Crack! Mana burst out of Haku's body, cracking the nigh-indestructible mithril teacup.



“Um? What... is that... supposed to mean?” Haku poured over the letter with eyes as big as saucers, but Rokuko hadn’t written anything else. She checked back to Keima’s letter and confirmed it didn’t mention anything about children.

“Chloe, does this mean what I think it means?”

“Yes, my lady. I can only conclude it means their relationship has finally reached that level.”

Smash! The teacup burst into pieces, spilling tea onto Haku’s hand and onto the white table. “...To some extent, yes, I had accepted him as Rokuko’s Dungeon Master. I had even grown to somewhat respect him over the past year or so. However! HOWEVER!” She slammed her fist against the table. Then, she stood abruptly.

“It’s decided. I will send an assassin. We will kill him before he makes a baby with Rokuko! Chloe!”

“Yes, my lady! It will be done.”

At last, Haku was sending an assassin to kill Keima. The decision had given her a bright, refreshed smile. “Ahahaha, oh Keima... Will you be able to defeat my assassin...?” In the end, would Keima be able to survive...? “Now then, let us hurry and select the assassin.”

“Might I ask you to finish your paperwork first?”

“...I suppose I must.”

Chloe had pointed to a large stack of paperwork. The assassin would have to be sent after it was taken care of.

In the end, would Keima be able to survive...?

Chapter 1

It was a fine day, until trouble came my way through vice chief Wozma.

“Chief Keima. Do you have a moment?”

“What, again with the brothel? I didn’t know you were this much of a dirty old man.”

“No, this is not about that.”

It wasn’t long ago that Wozma had been charmed by Succubi (probably) and started pushing for me to approve plans to build a brothel here, but it seemed he had gotten over that already.

“A letter from the Tsia Archduke has arrived and it requires your attention.”

A letter? At first I got annoyed since I had set up elaborate systems of bureaucracy to avoid having to deal with this kind of thing myself, but then I remembered that the Tsia Archduke was a member of the nobility. The one job I had as a town chief for show was dealing with the nobility and other high-profile individuals.

I took the letter from Wozma. Uhhh, alright, let’s see here. *In this season blessed by the graces of the God of Mountains, we have experienced the divine graces of the Ivory Goddess dancing from...*

“Wait, why the hell is this greeting so wordy? It’s a pain to read. Is there a summary?”

“Right here.”

If he had gone out of his way to write a summary I would have preferred him to just give that to me first, but still, he had done good work. He was skilled at showing off his own competence... I would expect nothing less from one of Haku’s spies.

Incidentally, the summary was three lines long.

1) The Tsia family holds my skills as an adventurer in high regard and wishes

to show their support.

2) They have a quest for me, but they can't give details through a letter.

3) They would like to discuss things further and request that I visit them at their home with one servant. (Not optional.)

I asked Wozma about his thoughts on the letter.

"It seems the Tsia family wishes to give you an exclusive quest. Perhaps they are using the opportunity to meet you. Up until now, you've only done quests through the Adventurer's Guild and the opportunity has never arisen." It took me this long to realize that the city was named Tsia because the Archduke's family name was Tsia.

"But man, I'm impressed they managed to turn these three points into a huge letter. I've gotta respect the nobility, they're something else."

"They disguise hidden codes within the purple prose and use euphemisms to convey the true extent of their sincerity. Said euphemisms can also be used as a trap to see if the reader is too ill-mannered or ignorant to see through them. There were no hidden codes in this letter, however." *Whiiich means the euphemisms were used. Well, that's what Wozma's here for.*

"But I believe that you are only a D-Rank adventurer, Chief Keima. That can hardly be considered too skilled, so I must question how he discovered your true talents."

"...Hm." It wouldn't be odd if Wozma knew about my B-Rank guild card, given that he was Haku's spy. Maybe he was hinting at that.

"By the way, it says 'not optional' on the third bit. Do I really have to go?"

"He is a noble with land, and one who has been permitted to govern the land surrounding Tsia City. The position of Archduke is not a lowly one. A mere town chief would not be capable of refusing an Archduke's invitation unless under dire circumstances; especially in your case, given the small distance between Goren and Tsia."

"Alright. Is being sleepy considered a dire enough circumstance?"

"Nap on the way there. Taking care of this is your highest priority as town

chief. Here is the sealed letter of invitation.”

Yeaaaah, figures. I took the letter of invitation from Wozma. There was clearly some kind of plot going on here, since he summoned me as an adventurer but not my entire party. The letter said I could bring a single servant and no more. Which meant... Well, who else but Niku? *A safe choice, but the best one.*

“Haaah. Alright. Guess I’ll go see what they’re up to.”

“My, you don’t seem enthusiastic. Normally one would be overjoyed at the chance to form connections with an Archduke.”

“Do I seem like that kind of guy to you?” I replied jokingly, to which Wozma shrugged.

“You don’t. I cannot imagine you caring about status or fame, nor are you struggling financially.” *Yep, that’s right. The nobility sounds like a pain to deal with and that ain’t me. Plus, there’s no stronger connection than Haku.*

“So maybe I don’t have to go?”

“Chief Keima. This has some relevance to the situation at hand, but the majority of food in Goren is purchased from Tsia. We get most of our wheat from there, not to mention vegetables and the like. We have fields by the town but their yield is low. Pavella is an option, but factors make it less than ideal. In summary, it would be unwise to displease the Archduke.”

“R-Right.” Wozma really drove the point home. But no matter what I did, our food problems could be solved by making rice and vegetables into common drops in the dungeon. That would be kinda suspicious, though. *Anyway, it’s a good plan B so now I don’t have to worry.*

All that aside, it seemed I had no choice but to go to Tsia soon. For now, it would be smart to drop by and tell Rokuko (who we had just recently established was now my partner, in a more meaningful sense than before) about this.

I went to my room and explained the situation to Rokuko, who was rolling around in my futon for some reason. Why was she in my room when she had a room of her own? And why was she in my futon? *I mean, I know we’re partners, but I think even partners should respect each other’s personal space. Not that I*

mind smelling Rokuko on my bed.

“And that’s the situation. Gonna go to Tsia and turn their quest down.”

“Take Niku with you. I won’t feel safe with you going out there alone.” *Huh? She didn’t have any problem with me leaving before, has she lost some trust in me? I mean, it’s fine, I was planning on bringing Niku with me anyway, but still.* “...Um, cause like, Leona did all sorts of stuff to you, remember? There needs to be someone with you to stop you in case you go crazy like earlier. Niku’s proven she can do that, so.”

“Ahhh...” I understood where Rokuko was coming from. She was just worried about me.

There had been a whole day where I went crazy, and I didn’t remember any of it. Apparently I had flirted with Rokuko and basically every girl I saw. The monster girls, Niku, Ichika... Well, I had just been clearly out of my mind.

It was all Leona’s fault. Yep, yep, it was Leona’s fault, all Leona, blame Leona. I could blame her and get away scott-free. The best part was that it was true.

“Sure, I was planning on bringing Niku from the start.”

“Okay. I’ll still be a little worried, but you can go. Come back if you start feeling off or sick.”

“You got it. Don’t wanna put myself at risk out there. But anyway, I’ve gotta get ready to go now. Gonna need to bring my futon and stuff.” I kicked Rokuko out of my futon and put it into {Storage}.

“Oh right, Keima, bring some DP with you,” suggested Rokuko while I was getting ready.

“You can take DP to other places?”

“Mhm. Or it’s more like, if you want to use DP outside of your dungeon, you need to prepare the DP ahead of time. Haku taught me how to do it earlier.”

“Oh, cool. Didn’t know that.” Now that she mentioned it, I had tried using the menu in the past but I had never tried using DP. I had just unconsciously assumed I needed to be in the dungeon to use it.

“So, DP is like, fundamentally stored inside of me, since I’m the Core.”

“Yeah.”

“That means I need to give you the DP myself.”

“Yup.”

Suddenly, Rokuko’s eyes started shifting. She held her hands together and fidgeted, looking suspicious as heck.

“Um! That means I need to give you the DP myself!”

“Yeah, that’s what you said. Hand it over.”

“When giving DP to their Dungeon Masters, um, Cores have to... K-Kiss them!” said Rokuko as she blushed bright red and furtively glanced in my direction.

“What’re you talking about? You can just use your hands.”

“.....”

I didn’t know that for sure, but Rokuko looked away awkwardly and confirmed it for me.

“You practiced trading DP with Haku using your hands, right?”

“...I did.”

“Leona gave me DP using her hands, too.”

“...Sh-She did.”

“So you can use your hands, right?” I said again, this time with more confidence. Rokuko looked away and held a hand out. I squeezed it and safely absorbed about 1,000 DP from her. Now I could use DP in Tsia too. She would probably die if I asked why she had lied about needing to kiss me, so I didn’t say anything.

“...A-Also, I’ll, um, give you a goodbye kiss!” Despite my tactical choice to drop the subject, Rokuko immediately launched another attack.

“Hey, where’d you learn about those?”

“There was something called manga in my DP Catalog, so I bought it. Oh... And right. I’ve learned a little Japanese. There’s a lot of simple stuff I can read

now.” *W-Wait, she just went and learned Japanese, the madwoman?! Putting aside all that about buying manga with DP, I’m pretty sure that Japanese is famously hard to learn!* “There was a skill scroll called {Japanese Language}. It was only 5,000 DP.”

“That’s a weird skill.” As expected of a fantasy world, you could learn languages as skills. Maybe I should make Niku and Ichika learn it too?

“But uh, anyway. You don’t have to give goodbye kisses. They’re not important.”

“They’re important for partners. I just decided on that now. So give it up and stick your cheek out!”

“A-Alright.” *Just decided now, huh? But fine, alright. A kiss on the cheek should be fine. I don’t have any proof of that, but I’m sure it’ll be fine.*

I bent my knees a little so Rokuko could reach me and stuck out my right cheek.

“W-W-Well, Keima. Bye bye... nmmm!” Rokuko then hesitantly kissed me on the cheek.

Oh man... My face is heating up. Her squishy lips are tickling my cheek. Is Rokuko okay? I glanced at her and saw she was looking away with bright red cheeks. She was so embarrassed she was trembling while holding her mouth down.

“...C-Come back safe, okay? And bring back souvenirs?”

“Yeah. See ya later.” I didn’t know what the quest was, but well, now I really felt like coming home safely.

* * *

We rode a cheap cart to Tsia, one that regularly bused customers back and forth between here and Goren. We got off by the gate and while everyone else lined up to go inside the normal way, we went through the side gate for nobles and those on royal business. They let us right through after I showed them the letter of invitation. *Both Niku and I got in for free. It’s a good day for penny pinchers, thanks Archduke.*

We passed through the gate to go see the Archduke as soon as possible... after dropping by some stands for food. I didn't want to stay there for so long, so I intended to visit right after lunch, the most awkward time for visitors. There was still some time to kill.

"Oh, there's a kebab stand. Smells good."

"Agreed, let's buy some."

"Welc— Woah, hey, it's you two! Been awhile since you've dropped by!"

Huh? Who's this douchebag...? At first I didn't recognize him, but then I remembered that there was only one guy I knew who ran a kebab stand. It didn't take long for things to click into place from there. He was the guy we'd sold rabbit meat to before.

"Surprised you recognize me. We've only met a few times."

"You taught me about blood draining, I wouldn't forget that. I'm guessing you didn't come to hunt rabbits today?"

"Yep, I've graduated from all that. I'm D-Rank now and not that desperate for cash."

"That's a shame, but congrats. Just bring some rabbits over if you ever get in the mood to eat'm. I'm always ready to buy good meat."

"Thanks. Anyway, I'll go ahead and take five kebabs."

"Coming right up. But wait, what flavor? I've been buying somethin' called tare sauce from some merchants and I've got lots of flavors now. The main stuff I use goes real good with rabbit meat, it tastes great."

That was probably the tare sauce from my dungeon. Pretty sure I started dropping it in the dungeon so I could use it in the inn. *All I can say is, I'm not surprised it's been commercialized like this.*

"I'll have some tare kebabs then. Kuro, you good with that too?"

"Yes."

I paid twenty-five coppers and he threw in a sixth kebab for free.

"Oh, thanks man."

“Don’t sweat it. I’m making the big bucks thanks to you.”

I went ahead and gave a kebab to Niku. *Yep, her tail’s wagging like crazy. Must be pretty good.*

I had one myself. You couldn’t go wrong with tare sauce. The kebab tasted great. The meat was denser than chicken, though, so it was a heartier meal than what I was used to eating with tare sauce.

“Master...”

“Ah, right, have another. You can have the rest, actually.” I gave the remaining kebabs to Niku and her tail went crazy. She stuffed her face full of kebabs right away. Tare sauce got all over her face, so I wiped it for her. *Wipe wipe... Yep, what a cutie.* I rubbed her head.

“You two are close as ever, I see. You sure you should keep her a slave?”

“Hey, tell that to her, not me. She won’t budge.” In reality, it wasn’t that I didn’t trust Niku. I was mainly worried that she wouldn’t be able to enter the Master Room with us if she wasn’t a slave. We were probably only managing it now since I had convinced Rokuko that slaves were items. Nobody had ever told her otherwise, so it was probably still working. “And well, basically, there’s some complex circumstances here.”

“Alright, I won’t dig too deep. Just take good care of her, y’hear?”

“Yeah.” I bought twenty more kebabs and stuck them into {Storage} to give to Rokuko and the others once I got back. There would probably be enough for the Succubi too.

We had filled up and the time was right. There was no reason not to go to the Archduke’s manor.

“Alright, let’s go. And uh... By the way, where does the Archduke live?”

“...I don’t know.”

We went back to the gate.

* * *

Naturally, the guards at the gate were also public officials who knew the way

to the manor. The letter of summons worked its magic and we were there in no time. *I've marked it on the map so I can find it on my own next time!*

The Archduke's manor was in the rich northeast of the city and it was large even compared to other fancy residences nearby. It was a white western manor, three stories tall, and despite the size of its garden behind the gate it was well kept. It almost felt like an entire park.

I handed the letter of summons to the guard by the gate and he let us inside. We passed through the large garden, entered through the front doors, and were immediately taken to a parlor. The guard didn't start ranting about dirty adventurers or anything. He treated us politely. *Looks like he trains his workers well.*

The sofa in the parlor was soft, although not as soft as the ones we used. The room in general had just enough vases, potted plants, and so on that it was neither bare nor too gaudy. The tapestry hanging on the wall was pretty nice too. It depicted Tsia Mountain. *I get it, he's kind of marketing the area here.*

After a bit of observing the parlor with Niku sitting beside me, there was a knock at the door.

"Ah, right." I reflexively stood up to greet the visitor and in came a sharply dressed, handsome gentleman. He was somewhat muscular, but what stood out was the pair of white wings growing from his back.

My eyes were drawn to them. They were long enough to reach his knees from his shoulders. *Ngh, the heck is this? How cool is it to just have wings growing from your back...! I wonder if he can fly?*

"Kept you waiting, huh? I'm Bonodore Tsia. But maybe the Archduke would be more recognizable for you."

"I'm Keima. This is Kuroinu. Please call her Kuro. It's good to meet you, Archduke." I nodded and Niku did too. Naturally, I couldn't just up and call her Niku in front of him.

"You can call me Bonodore, Keima."

"As you wish, Lord Bonodore." The Archduke must have noticed where my eyes were going. He bent his wings a little.

“Is this your first time seeing a Winged?”

“Yes. As you guessed, I’ve never seen a Winged before. They seem pretty warm.”

“I see. There aren’t many of us in this region and it can be hard to tell us apart when we shrink our wings beneath our clothing. You may have met some of us without realizing it.” *You can shrink those wings? Wow.*

We exchanged a handshake then sat down, facing each other. Under the surface, Bonodore had hit me with a clean jab and started our meeting with the upper hand. *I mean, Wozma did tell me that he was a Winged. I just didn’t expect the wings to look so cool in person. Though actually... Wouldn’t they get in the way when he tries to sleep on his back?*

“Now then, before we talk about why you’re here, would you mind having a little chat? I would like to hear about your village.”

“I’m not sure exactly what you mean.”

“I’m talking about Goren, of course. Let’s see... How many Iron Golems are hunted there, for example?”

“Well, let’s see if I can remember... I don’t have concrete details on things like that. I think we hunted about thirty over the winter. I guess that’s something important here?”

“Each town impacts the territory’s wealth in its own way. Thirty in a single winter. That’s a decent amount. With thirty Iron Golems you could make two hundred sets of full armor, or otherwise around ten thousand swords.”

When he put it like that, the numbers seemed surprisingly big. *He can really make that much from them? Well... I guess Iron Golems are just big clumps of iron, yeah.*

“How many of those did you hunt yourself?”

“I hunt with parties, but I think I’ve been involved with hunting about six of them.”

Wait, is he trying to fish out information about how skilled of an adventurer I am? He better not boost the difficulty of the quest or something.

“Er, if possible, I would like to talk about the quest now.” I tried changing the topic and at that moment, someone knocked quietly on the door.

“That’s my daughter. I called her ahead of time, since this quest involves her. Let’s talk about it with her. Mai, come on in.”

“Excuse me.” A girl with blue hair walked into the room. The two bangs on either side of her head curled forward a bit, but everything else was perfectly straight. She wore chaste white clothing and she was about ten years old. When she turned to close the door, I saw that she had wings on her back as well. But they were much smaller than the Archduke’s and looked about the size of a dove’s. Maybe they were small because she was a child, or maybe because she was a girl. It could be both or it could be neither... But either way, they were small enough that they probably didn’t bother her when sleeping.

“I am Maiodore Tsia.” She lifted her skirt slightly and gave an elegant bow while bending one knee. In other words she curtsied, the greeting of dignified ladies.

“It is an honor to meet you, my lady. I am named Keima, and I am an adventurer. This is Kuroinu. Please call her Kuro.”

“I’m Kuro.” Niku lowered her head in a small bow.

With our introductions done, Maiodore sat next to Bonodore.

“Cute, isn’t she? I’m very proud of my daughter.”

“Well, she certainly seems like a fine young lady.”

“Oh my, what a gentleman. Father, this man will be my bodyguard?”

“Indeed. I was just about to discuss that with him.” *Bodyguard? Uh, I’m pretty sure they could find a better bodyguard than me out there.* But despite my doubts, I decided to hear him out.

“I can’t give you all the details just yet, but right now my family is being targeted by a criminal organization. I want to take this opportunity to strengthen my daughter’s guard.”

“Right... But surely there are more skilled adventurers than me that you could hire. Why call me out specifically?” I just went ahead and asked the question

that came to mind a second ago. Bonodore gave a firm nod.

“You are correct. We are seeking more of a supporting role from you.”

“Support?” That could mean a lot of things, from helping her go shopping to buying her enough time to flee from an army. *I’m not gonna say yes to that without some more specifics.*

“The quest consists of two stages. One, gather information on the organization. Two, protect my daughter... Mai.”

“Can you elaborate?”

“The organization is based in the southern slums. The skilled adventurers and soldiers here are well known enough that infiltration is impossible. That’s where you come in, Keima.” *Okay, that makes more sense. I’m famous in Goren, but I don’t travel enough to be well known in Tsia.*

“Once you’ve finished that, I want you to protect my daughter while I send my men to raid the organization. And that’s the quest.”

Maiodore was apparently the younger of three siblings, but the oldest brother was a soldier leading the charge, and the second brother had already hired another adventurer. “Okay, I see what you mean now.” In short, he wanted me to protect Maiodore on the side while I’m information gathering. My main job wasn’t guard duty after all.

“We have some information already, which I will give to you later. But we need a lot more information than that. We know enough to raid the organization now, but we think that they still have a lot of escape routes left. I want to close off as many of them as possible.” The organization was originally a bunch of smaller ones. But recently there was a shift and they ended up fused into one large organization.

“Their leader made one mistake. They let themselves get big enough for us to notice. Our citizens are already being negatively impacted by their presence.” As the Archduke, it was his duty to destroy the organization and protect his innocent citizens.

“Mai, this is relevant to you too. Be ready when it’s time for him to guard you.”

“Understood, Father. My life is in your hands, Keima, Kuro.” *Maiodore sure is a sweet girl, huh? ...Wait. Crap, they’re just moving forward like I’ve already said yes. Hold up, hold up, hold up.*

“Uhhh. We’ll need to discuss my payment before I accept this quest.”

“Oh yes, I forgot about that. You can leave now, Mai.”

“Uh-huh. Keima, when it is time for you to guard me, please tell me tales of your time adventuring. I am ever so looking forward to it,” said Mai before standing up and leaving the room. Once she was gone, I looked back at Bonodore.

“Now then, about your payment.”

“I’m warning you now: if I don’t think the pay is worth it, I will absolutely turn this quest down.”

“Yes, naturally. However, I don’t think you’ll want to pass up on this opportunity.” *He must be pretty confident in his payment. But let’s make it clear. I’ll turn down an average payment. Money? Titles? Women? I don’t want any of those, I have enough. What can you offer me?* I readied myself on the inside, but in the end, I wasn’t ready for him.

“Your payment will be information on the Divine Pillow.” *...How’d he know exactly what I want most?!*

The Divine Bedding. Seven pieces of a bedding set that if collected will turn the owner into an immortal demigod. He was offering me information on one piece of that set.

“Why would you give that information as a reward?”

“Because I heard you were interested in it. If you don’t want to know, I can prepare another payment.” *The Archduke’s information network is far stronger than I could have imagined! I hate it, but he knows what I want...! Actually, wait, after deciding to gather the Divine Bedding set I submitted an information gathering quest to the Adventurer’s Guild. Under the Beddhist Church’s name. Yeaah... Okay. I made it easy for him.*

“What kind of information?”

“How much I tell you will be determined by how well you do. But for example... I could tell you where it is.” *Where it is? Okay, yeah, that’s exactly what I want to know. Crap. I lose.*

“Unsatisfied?”

“...No, that payment is enough. I will accept the quest.”

“Good, glad that we’re on the same page here,” said Bonodore with a smile. “Naturally, I have a monetary reward prepared as well. Ten silvers as an advance payment. The rest depends on how much information you gather. If you fail and cause collateral damage, the fees will be subtracted from your reward, but I’m sure you’re skilled enough for that not to happen.” *I guess it could be bad if the fees end up too high.* “Additionally, I will not question what methods you use to gather information.”

“You won’t question my methods? Really?”

“Do show some restraint, I don’t want you damaging the town. But if you don’t go too far, we won’t ask any questions. I’m sure you have some tricks hidden up your sleeve.” *Yeah, that’s fair. It would be a disaster if I set the town on fire just to gather some information.*

“Can I charge you for my expenses?”

“Up to twenty silvers, but you’ll have to give a report on what you used them on. Naturally, I can’t hand out money for free.” *In other words, spill the beans or pay for it yourself.*

“Time limit?”

“You have at most one month. Of course, you can finish before then. You just need useful information.”

“...And the information on the organization you said you would tell me?”

“It’s nothing major, but the organization is named The Last Commune. Their base is somewhere in the slums outside of the southern gate. Everything else I can’t tell you, for fear you will leak the information elsewhere.”

“Alright.” *Okay, this quest... How should I finish it off? I have some ideas and it doesn’t seem like it’ll be too hard. Not taking this quest would be the dumbest*

thing I ever did. But since he flashed information I want, I think I should go a little overboard here.

“Oh yeah, there’s something important I forgot to ask. Mind if I ask one more thing?”

“What’s that?” I looked at Bonodore and gave a fake grin.

“...You don’t mind if I destroy the organization myself, do you?” Bonodore’s eyes widened, then he spread out his wings and laughed in amusement.

“Heh, hahaha! Of course not. Do what you can, and if you actually manage it, I’ll help you get the Divine Pillow myself!”

“You sure? I’ll destroy them even if you end up being the mastermind or something.”

“Feel free. I imagine the mastermind is a regional noble. I give you permission to take him down. Ah... But if someone of my family is the mastermind, I would appreciate you telling me ahead of time.” *Alright, I got a nice promise from him. Guess I’ll take this seriously.*

“Okay, let’s make this official. I accept your quest, Lord Bonodore. Please wait for my report.”

“Very well then, Keima. I expect good things from you.” I went ahead and asked Bonodore to send a message to Goren stating that I had accepted the quest and wouldn’t be back for some time. *Eh... The faster I finish this, the better. Yeah.*

* * *

“Master, what’s the plan?” asked Niku, held tilted. We had left the manor right after the discussion to get started immediately.

“Our strategy will be built around infiltration. The easiest way to learn more about an organization and destroy it is to infiltrate it.” A group of people doing not so morally correct things would make sure to keep information locked tightly within the group. Our dungeon was the same way.

But organizations needed manpower to operate. Our dungeon could use monsters in place of people, but a criminal organization needed to find

members somewhere. Slaves were an option, but skilled slaves were only sold in official slave markets and would be difficult for criminals to obtain. Which meant that, well, birds of a feather flock together. Criminals got their manpower in the form of more criminals.

Not to mention that an organization breaking the law could never have too many bottom tier lackies around for doing chores and taking the fall when caught. I wouldn't be able to just snap my fingers and become an administrator there, but infiltrating the bottom layer should be incredibly easy. Then you just have to remember that there exist people giving orders to the bottom layer. There are people ordering around those people, then people ordering those, and so on and so on. Follow the chain of command up high enough and you'll reach the top dog.

"The problem is how to climb the chain of command, but well... I've got her." I looked at my Succubus ring, Kosaki.

A Succubus's charm powers. Nothing would be faster for making people listen to my own orders. On top of that, my research showed that the charm powers could even interfere with the target's memories. I could seal memories, erase them, and even modify them. Charm powers were just ridiculously overpowered.

"...Hey, you awake?"

"Fwaah, um, what? No, I'm not sleeping. I'm a ring, how could I sleep? Don't be ridiculoous,ahaha." *She was sleeping. Not that I mind, as long as she does her job.*

"So, here's the question. Do you think you could use charms to dig deep into a criminal organization?"

"Definitely, though it'll be kinda hard if they have anti-charm skills or items."

"...Guess I'll just pray they don't."

"I mean, there's something you could do to make all this a lot more reliable."

"Reliable?"

"If you become a Succubus yourself, Master, you'll be able to use your

overwhelming dream powers to smash through resistances. You could even charm other Succubi. With a smile for weaker ones, even!" *The heck is dream power? And why is she saying become a Succubus myself? Wasn't I turning into a femboy or whatever?*

"...Niku couldn't do it?"

"You don't want to get charmed yourself, right? Do you think you could stop yourself after Niku goes Succubus? She wouldn't stop you herself, so."

"Ahhh..." As a slave, Niku wouldn't be able to reject me. Nice catch. *It's good to have skilled subordinates. And either way, I don't want Niku using charms much. I'll do the dirty work myself.*

"Alright, I gotta make contact with them before I can do anything, but it wouldn't be smart to go out there without a disguise." There was no internet or photography in this world. I didn't think that my appearance would be linked to my identity very easily, but it was possible that somebody would recognize me. My black hair and black eyes stood out around here, for instance. Barring all else, they had to go.

"Hm...? Oh. Understood," said Niku.

"What?" asked Kosaki. "You wanna hide your face? Are you gonna sleep some more to get rid of the bags under your eyes or something?" She hadn't guessed what I was thinking, but Niku had. I could change my appearance easily and completely with my {Ultra Transformation} skill.

"Let's go somewhere outside of the public view." We left the main street and went to a back alley. I found a random building and hid in its shadows, out of sight, then looked around. Nobody was nearby.

"This should be good, I guess?"

"No, Master. I can sense people watching us. They followed us here."

"...Seriously? I didn't notice them at all, holy crap." *Did Niku learn a skill that detects people staring at her or something like that?* Either way, I went further down the alley. Before long we ended up in the shopping district.

"Well, uh, here we are." *I remember doing a toilet cleaning quest here at*

some point. "Did we lose them?"

"...Several presences united and are still following us."

"They're persistent. Spies from the Archduke, maybe? Makes sense they're fast, this is their home base." I didn't want spies to see me using {Ultra Transformation} under any circumstances. Which meant I had to suck it up and start Plan B. *Let's just think of this as, uh, a little experiment. Things could get real bad real fast if this fails, but Bonodore said he wouldn't question my methods. I could just ignore any complaints he throws at me.*

"Niku. Are they all looking at us?"

"Yes. The alley is narrow enough that I believe they are all looking in our direction." *Alright. I don't see anyone around us. That means the only people looking at us are the people following us. Here we go.*

"Kosaki. You have my permission. Possess me. No fancy special effects."

"For reals? Alrighty then, here I go!" I immediately felt a heat rushing from the ring to the core of my body. I visualized making gates within the walls of my spirit to allow her inside and with a thump of my heart, my line of vision shrunk closer to the ground. It felt similar to when I transformed into Rokuko earlier. It seemed that my femboy Succubus self was smaller than my normal self.

The heat within flowed throughout my body like blood in the form of pure power. *This is what it feels like to be possessed, huh?*

"...Looks like you managed to hold in the special effects this time. Good, and also, dang my voice is high pitched."

"Fwaaah... Hooly fuckin' succuballs... This is some shit, bro... We could conquer a whole friggin' kingdom like this...! Oh, no way, I can't even move a single one of your fingers. Yo, but still, this power feels so GOOOoooooOOOooooooOOD!" Kosaki was tripping the heck out.

Anyway... I looked at my chest. Nothing. I touched my crotch. Something. *Alright. I'm shorter, but I'm still a guy.* Feeling some relief, I went ahead and tried giving orders to our pursuers.

"Everyone, look at me. Make all of your companions who were following me

look at me. Respond if you understand. Tell me once everyone's here."

"Understood..." I heard several people reply in unison. Niku included, for some reason. It seemed that my orders had worked. Anyway, setting aside Niku, who was looking at me with flushed cheeks like she had gotten drunk, I decided to look over my new appearance while waiting for all of the pursuers to see me and get charmed.

I was wearing a white dress, which covered a surprisingly large amount of skin for a Succubus outfit. Though to be fair, it was a short dress overall. I also had on black socks that went up to my knees and black boots. Not to mention two long white gloves that covered my squishy, slender arms up to the elbows. I could see my straight black hair beside my eyes.

Wait, what's gonna happen with my Golem Assistance? Is it gone now? I think I remember Niku's clothes changing and then going back to normal afterwards. I'll have to experiment with this later.

"Princess, we have assembled. We all weep tears of gratitude for being given the opportunity to see your blessed visage." It wasn't long before our pursuers assembled. *Wait... By princess does he mean me? Uh, sure, alright.*

"Everyone, come out where I can see you."

"As you wish!" At once, four average-looking citizens appeared in front of me. But they had arrived out of nowhere like ninjas. *They legitimately just jumped down out of nowhere in front of me, holy cow.*

"Is this everyone who was following me? What's your organization structure? Who do you work for?"

"This is everyone. We work in two teams of two. We belong to the Tsia Army Intelligence Division." *Perfect, they're charmed and listening to everything I say. It's hard for me to tell, but I guess I'm just that attractive right now? Maybe I should look in a mirror... actually, nah, I don't want to charm myself by accident. Guess I can just ask Niku how I looked later. Anyway, two teams of two, huh? That seems reasonable. Though really, that seems like a few too many men to dedicate just to following me.*

"Shouldn't an intelligence division or whatever have charm resistance,

though?”

“I have charm resistance, but how is that relevant here? I don’t need to be charmed to expose my heart before my princess. This is the natural state of all living beings.” *Wait, he has charm resistance? And he got charmed?* At first I was confused, but then I remembered that my own sleep resistance skill had a level. Charm resistance probably had levels too.

“What’s your charm resistance level?”

“It’s level 3. Strong enough to resist a Succubus’ charm.”

“Y’see,” interjected Kosaki, “You need at least level 5 to completely nullify a normal Succubus. But you’re a Queen-class Succubus right now, Master, so you’d be hard to resist without something higher than that.” *Dang, I’m a great Succubus. I don’t want to be, but here I am.*

“Is it easy to develop charm resistance?”

“Up to about level 2. Level 3 is rare enough that acquiring it would put one in good standing for becoming the commander of an intelligence squad.” *Alright, that’s good to know. That basically means the only people who will be able to resist my charms are basically general-tier, big deal dudes. A criminal organization based in the slums shouldn’t have too many people like that.*

“Okay. All of you, wait for ten minutes aft—... Nah, actually, that’s too long. Once I leave this alley, lose your memories and lose track of us. Overwrite your memories to fill in these gaps. That’s all. Go back to the main street.”

“As you wish.” replied all four of them at once. *Eugh, that sent chills down my spine. I don’t like seeing dudes look at me like that. All horny and dopey. I’m definitely not gonna let Niku do things like this. My dakimakura would end up soiled.* The spies returned to the main street, acting dreamy.

“Master...”

“Whoa! Wh-What’s with you, Niku?” Niku hugged me out of nowhere, making me let out a weird cry. *Does my dress not have a back part? It’s not that cold, but it definitely feels like she’s touching my skin.*

“What should I do?”

“U-Uh, right. Let go of me for a second so I can end the possession.” She gave me one tight squeeze and a long sniff before letting go.

“...Possession, end.”

“Geheh... Ngh! The second you took back permission... gaaah!” The heat in my body shot back to the ring. Simultaneously, I returned to my original height. My clothes returned to normal too. My Golem Assistance... was working, yep. *Whew, it would have been a huge pain if its memory got reset or whatever.*

“Alright, Niku, check and make sure nobody’s around us.”

“.....”

“Niku? Wake uuup, Niku.” I poked her on the cheek and she snapped back to her senses.

“I-I’m okay. There’s nobody around us.”

“Perfect. {Ultra Transformation}.” I transformed into a gruff looking dude. Since {Ultra Transformation Lv3} could only transform into things that existed in real life, I chose to transform into the guy I met back at the imperial capital’s Adventurer Guild, Don Tokoi. Well, one of his small-time looking subordinates, anyway. *He’s about as tall as me so I don’t need to change my clothes. Feels good.*

“I kinda want to disguise you too, Niku, but eh. You’ll be fine. That collar will prove that you’re my slave, it shouldn’t be an issue. Maybe we should change you into raggedy clothes? Nah, it’d be weird if you were clean but not your clothes. Guess I’ll just pass you off as my prized slave that I’m putting a lot of money into.” *Wait. That’s not technically wrong, I guess. She just happens to be my dakimakura too.*

“...Even your smell changes. It feels like someone else is wearing your clothes, Master.”

“Well, it’ll be fine. Let’s go to the slums outside the southern gate.”

“Understood.”

I took Niku and headed for the southern gate. Despite having walked all the way to the shopping district, we didn’t have anything in particular to do there.

I showed my guild card at the gate and paid the fee to get through. There weren't any issues since guild cards don't have photos or anything, but honestly, that felt kind of like a problem. What if someone used a guild card they found on the ground? *Pretty slack if you ask me. Maybe them being so slack is how a slum ended up being built in the first place?*

South of Tsia, Slum Town.

There were small tent-like homes built from combining sticks, boards, and cloth into square boxes that looked like cardboard houses. They were lined up next to each other along makeshift roads and sometimes four of them were built together into one larger home. The people were clothed in rags and had either harsh or defeated looks in their eyes, nothing in between. I couldn't see any children other than babies, but it was possible that they were all inside.

The slum was indeed a slum no matter how you painted it. At best it had a lot of personality, at worst it was like a hotbed for crime. My first impression after stepping into it was that it didn't stink as bad as I expected. Everyone could use {Purification} so it was probably a lot cleaner than any slum on Earth.

"Let's go, Niku."

"....."

"Uh, Niku? Can you hear me?"

"Ah, s-sorry. It's just really hard for me to remember that you're Master when you look like that..."

"No helping that." The fact that {Ultra Transformation} was powerful enough to trick even Niku was actually incredible, no way around it. That's a Hero skill for you.

In any case, I tried talking to a guy nearby. One with a defeated expression, rather than a hostile one.

"Hey, I wanna talk to whoever's in charge here... Know where I should go?" I asked, holding out a sandwich. The guy snatched it away in less than a second.

"...Go down that street and there's a bigger shack. Ask there."

"Alright."

The guy pointed at a street that was so small I kinda had to question if it was a street at all, but either way, I walked down it. There was a wood shack at the end of it. It wasn't a makeshift tent like what I had seen, it was an actual shack. Looking closer, I could see there were other fairly normal shacks in the general area. This was probably where those with authority lived, or maybe it was a workplace of some kind.

I looked around to check and indeed Niku was still behind me. *Don't go and get kidnapped, alright? I mean, I may be weaker than you, but still.* Anyway, I knocked on the shack's door.

"What?"

"Uhhh, well, some stuff happened and I wanna join you guys. I asked where I could talk to the boss of this place and they said here."

"Tch. Come in." I walked in and immediately a guy hiding by the door threw a punch in my direction. I had expected something like that to happen here, so I bent my knees to dodge the blow using Golem Assistance to boost my speed. Niku leaped over me and grabbed the guy's arm, twisting it behind his back and forcing him onto the ground. *Uh, is she part of a SWAT team or something? That was definitely the kind of thing a special forces operator would do.*

"You bastard! Who sent you?!"

But that just pissed the other dudes off. Some of them drew knives. *Oh crap. We came here to infiltrate them, not to fight. But I mean... There's only four people here (including the guy Niku's holding down), so this wouldn't be a hard fight to win. Especially since they seem to be at the bottom of this organization. Can't imagine these guys are anything but low-ranking thugs.*

"Sorry, I just thought you guys liked to haze newbies like this. Let'm go, Niku."

"...Yes, Master." Niku let go of the guy she was holding down. He stood up awkwardly and rejoined the other three, whereupon he got smacked on the head. Didn't seem like too hard of a smack, though.

"You friggin' idiot! Everyone looks down on you 'cause you can't even beat kids like that!"

"S-Sorry, bro. I just... She's so strong."

“Tch, enough with the excuses. Anyway. Who’re you?” The thug glared at me. *Yeah, I don’t feel any pressure from him. He’s afraid. Not surprising for someone who just saw a little girl beat the crap out of his pal. Hey, I’d be on my guard too if that happened. I’d be scared as heck. I can’t blame him.* Thus, I answered him calmly.

“I’m Keima. Or at least, that’s the name on this guild card I found.” I said, showing them my Adventurer’s Guild card. It had *D-Rank Adventurer: Keima* written clearly on it and there was no mistaking that it was a legitimate card.

“...How’d you get your hands on that?”

“You really wanna make me say it? Hey, I can reenact what happened if I gotta.” I said, looking at the thug’s neck meaningfully and touching the hilt of my beloved Siesta. Thankfully, the thug picked up on my implication without me having to lie. He put a hand on his neck and stepped back. “Nah, no need for that. I get ya. What business do you have with us?”

“Business? Nah, I just uh... I heard that la... la... Last Call? Some group here runs the place. I want money, so yeah. Need some extra muscle or whatever?”

“Last Commune. Don’t make that mistake again if you wanna work for us.” The guy corrected me with the exact name of the organization I was looking for. No doubt this was the place, then.

“I guess you’re not the boss of the Last Commune?”

“Course not. All I manage is this shack and the tents around it. We’re basically like the guards of this spot.” It seemed that the Last Commune had established their territory and were basically governing the areas they controlled. Did that mean the slum would become a lawless wasteland after I took the organization down? Probably, but that wasn’t my problem.

“...Wait, why don’tcha just take some quests from the Adventurer’s Guild? ‘Specially if you’re confident in your skills.” He had a point. But that was one point I had expected him to make.

“Let’s just say I have a history. I don’t wanna take quests if I can help it.” *Yep. Because I’d rather be sleeping. I’m only doing all this ‘cause I want the Divine Pillow.*

“Alright. Guess working here would be the fastest way to make money for ya, huh?” The boss thug signaled to one of his lackeys, who then went to some other room in the shack.

“So, what’s happening? You gonna hire me? I’m gonna be more useful than that idiot over there, at least.”

“...Vog, he’s talking shit to you.”

“Ngh...” He couldn’t talk back since he had indeed just been beaten by a little girl.

“Basically, just gimme a job and watch for a week. You can pay me and her together as one person.” I patted Niku’s head.

“May as well, then... I’ll give my boss the heads up about you.”

“Yeah, thanks.”

“...And what’s with that niku of yours, anyway? She some kinda monster?”

“She’s belonged to the owner of this card. Pretty nice pick up, huh? She’s pretty cute, but don’t think about touching her.”

And so, I successfully infiltrated the criminal organization known as the Last Commune. I was being started off as a guard at the bottom of the bottom. *Time to get serious and see how far I can go.*

* * *

One week later. I sincerely regretted my decision to get serious.

“Aboooo. Mamaaa, pat my heaaaad.” *Okay, did you hear that? I bet you would think that’s coming from a three-year-old kid or something. But no. It came from a muscular, battle-scarred mercenary named Hugo (32 years old).*

Even when being generous, he was pretty clearly an older dude. A macho man who had clearly spent his life on the battlefield. But Hugo here (32 years old) was using my lap as a pillow and spitting out lines fit for a three-year-old. To be clear, I was in my Succubus femboy form, but still.

“...Good boy, goood boy. You’re a very, very good boy, Hugo.” And in turn I spat out that empty line while gently patting his head. (I used to hate touching

these people at all, but I had gotten used to it.)

“Mamaaa, aaah, Mama’s smell... You smell so niiice... abooo...”

“Eugh! Uh... N-No teasing, okay? Good boys don’t tease their mothers.”

“Okaaaay, sorry Mamaaaa.” Goosebumps covered my skin after he rubbed his bearded face against my stomach. I had been dealing with this kind of thing for a solid week and had learned to look at them with dead eyes and an empty mind to survive.

The people on the bottom were so much easier. They got charmed just by looking at me. I thought this whole thing would be a cakewalk and I’d race up the ladders, each boss introducing me to his boss in turn, but the upper echelons of the Last Commune had higher charm resistance than I expected. To be precise, it all started with the boss of the slum’s illegal slave trade (rank wise, a guy similar to the owner of a large store). He showed just a little resistance after I turned into a Succubus. It went like so:

“Ngh... gah...!” For the first time, someone remained standing after I said “kneel before me.” I was so surprised I reflexively asked Kosaki what was up.

“(Hey, Kosaki, what’s going on here? Why’s he still standing?)”

“(Oh, don’t worry. He’s just a little resistant to Succubi, he’s basically got a charm resistance level of about 4.)” Kosaki answered without missing a beat.

“(Didn’t you say they’d be defenseless up to level 5?)”

“(Are you saying he’s not defenseless right now? He’s just standing still, stuck in place.)” *Well... That is true.*

The kind of bad dudes that lived in slums were always living on the edge of death. One wrong move and their life would be over. That kind of lifestyle subconsciously built up self-restraint in them, which in turn resulted in a surprisingly high level of charm resistance. And on top of that, they basically never let their guard down under any circumstances. To put it simply, they had mental firewalls that were much sturdier than the average person’s.

“(Anyway, for this guy, you just gotta say ‘Big bwudder, what’s wrong?’ and he’ll be down in a snap.)”

Uh? I doubted my ears for a second. *The hell is this slut saying?*

“(Didn’t you hear me? Say ‘Big bwudder, what’s wrong?’ with a cute voice.)”

“(Nah, I mean, I heard you... Do I really have to say that?)”

“(You know Succubi usually have to charm *and* seduce people, right? You gotta be a real genius to charm people with just your looks. You wouldn’t eat food on the ground no matter how good it looked, right?)” It seemed that working around mental barriers was second nature to Succubi. Everyone knew how Succubi worked. That was so normal in this world that Kosaki didn’t even feel the need to explain it to me.

Indeed. Seduction.

You could crack mental barriers through seduction. Those cracks could then be exploited to charm them. Which reminded me that Neruneh hadn’t really affected me much when she turned into a Succubus. That wasn’t because I had resisted her, it was because Neruneh simply hadn’t tried seducing me.

“(You are still technically a dude, Master, so that’s probably holding him back a little.)” Technically? *I’m not just technically a guy, I am a guy!* “(Anyway, skilled Succubi can just instinctively tell what kinda things peeps are into. I only know what this guy’s into since I’m possessing you right now, so I’m figuring you can figure it out on your own too.)” I took another look at the guy struggling in front of me.

...This guy, likes... little sisters. Yeah, there’s no doubting that.

“(Alright, I get it. That’s why you mentioned that line.)”

“(Yup, exactly. But well, you just need to tease him a bit and he’ll be done for. Aaah, I love easy jobs.)” Seduction could be accomplished with simple words. *Okay, let’s give it a shot.*

“Uhhh... Big, brother... what’s... uh... wrong?” I said the line in a flat monotone and the struggling man immediately fell to his knees as if he hadn’t just been resisting me at all.

“Aaah, nothing at all, lil’ sis. Eheheh.” I sensed the perverted lust in his laughter and a chill ran down my spine.

“(...Uh, isn’t this gonna be a little annoying?)”

“(You wanna be like a normal Succubus and use your whole body to seduce him like a real pervert?)”

“(Ah. Right. I’m sorry. This is a piece of cake, I’m glad it’s so easy.)” The day I did something like that would be the day I lost my chastity, no doubt about it. I wanted to avoid that by any means possible. At the time I successfully seduced him with just a few words, so I tried not to think about what I was doing.

But my next target was the female boss of an unlicensed brothel, and well, she fought back a little harder. *I think I have to give up on getting through this without any mental scars*, I thought while she sniffed my belly button. What kind of fetish was a fetish for belly button smells?

In the following days I charmed an endless number of villainous looking people by touching them a little, getting touched a little, and calling them names like “big brother,” “darling,” “papa,” “my love,” “big sis,” “Master,” “pig,” and so on with a blank expression.

Luckily, my charm powers were strong enough that they would ignore me cutting corners or acting off. Just like Rokuko had seen the Succubus Niku as me, people were looking at me with a mental filter (normal Succubi had to pay more attention to the details when seducing people).

Well, in my case, I could instantly seduce just about anyone by taking their lust head on, but that would be saying goodbye to my chastity. Thus, I had to delicately dance around their lust without their knowing, approaching them through indirect means. It slowed things down but kept my chastity safe.

I now looked at the spies I had charmed during my first Succubus transformation in a new light. They had been charmed so easily because they had low charm resistance and weren’t on guard against being charmed. Small fry, in other words. Consider me surprised that villains were much better than the good guys at keeping their desires in check. *Maybe it’s partially because they’re already doing what they want every day, so seduction is less meaningful to them? Well... Either way, I’ve finally reached the administrators of the organization.*

It took a whole week. It felt like a very short week and a very long week.

The guy on my lap (Hugo, age 32) was the number two of the organization. He had the mental strength you would expect from a hardened warrior. He could still move and talk normally even after seeing me in my Succubus form.

But naturally, I sensed his incredibly perverted desire to have a young girl pat his head like a mother. I sat on a couch in his dirty room and patted my lap, saying “It’s okay. Come here, little boy.” to seduce him. Judging by the stupid grin on his face, he was about ready. All I had to do was get him to spit out the location of the organization’s top dog.

“Hugo, there’s something I want you to tell me.”

“What is iiit, Mama? Ask anythiiiing.” The older dude looked up at me with wide, round eyes. *Yuck.*

“Uhhhhh, well, do you know where the top of this organization is?”

“Mmm. I’ll tell you if you kiss my foreheaaaad.” It was already hard to pat the head of an older muscular dude as he babbled like a baby. Like, really hard. But through sheer determination I managed to force a smile on my face (it looked like a compassionate smile to him).

“...I haaaate selfish kids.”

“Noooo...! I’m a good boy, so I’ll tell you!” *Looks like he’s finally gonna tell me... Finally, that took awhile. This guy sure had a strong mind. But it’s my win. Tomorrow, I’ll finally be meeting the head of the organization.*

I was laying down in a fancy room much better than the little tent given to me as a lowly guard. I could only use {Ultra Transformation} three times per twenty-four hours, and I couldn’t transform into a Succubus while already transformed (my compatibility with the Succubus transformation changed depending on who I had transformed into). I had thus asked the female boss of the unlicensed brothel to give me a room I could relax in untransformed. It was normally a room where the prostitutes worked, but it was at the same time the best place in all the slums to keep to myself out of sight. I added on a lock and key bought with DP just to be safe.

“Good work, Master.”

“Yeah... I’m exhausted. But this will all be over tomorrow.” I healed my tired body, transformed into neither a thug nor a Succubus.

The first two days I had slept while transformed, but that really bothered Niku so I stopped. Niku was my bodyguard and I wanted her to always be at peak performance. That was partially why I had secured this room for us.

“I wonder what I should do once I have the whole organization charmed.”

“...Destroy it?”

“Yeah, but how? Maybe I should just send all the administrators to the city guards.” That would definitely end up destroying the organization. *Yeah, sounds like a plan.*

“Will you bring them there yourself?”

“Nah, I’ll have the Last Commune people have a moral awakening and turn themselves in. All I’ll do is convince them a little.” While I was at it, I would have them gather evidence on themselves. That would save me time.

“Okay, guess it’s time to sleep. Niku.”

“Right.” Niku climbed into bed with me. She was a skilled dakimakura who made each night better.

...Suddenly, I remembered that I had given an older dude a lap pillow today. *Aren’t I basically forcing Niku to do the same thing here?*

“...♪” *Nah, it’s different cause Niku actually enjoys it. Right.*

Anyway, the next day went by smoother than I expected. Basically, the top of the organization was a noble living right in Tsia City. He had a pretty nice villa and everything. The Archduke had basically been right about everything.

Naturally, the top of the organization had charm resistance. But his right hand man Hugo was a lot stronger than him. The top guy had a foot fetish and snapped the moment I stepped on him.

...I can sympathize with his fetish, I really can, but it’s kinda gross seeing him go all out over it. To think a dude clinging to my feet would look this gross. Guess fetishes are stuff you should just keep to yourself... On that day, I swore to myself to show more self-restraint in the future.

Also, between you and me, the second I did that Kosaki murmured something about me developing charm resistance.

After defeating the top, I summoned the administrators and got to work deconstructing the organization. Naturally, I hadn't charmed every single one of the administrators yet, so I summoned them into a different room, one by one, under the guise of the leader wanting to talk to them, and then charmed them.

Once that was done, I had them gather again and convinced the perverts — admittedly, they were people I had turned into perverts myself — that they were in the wrong and that they should all turn themselves in tomorrow.

The next day, they each gathered as much evidence of their crimes as they could and proudly gathered before me.

“Everyone, I'll be waiting for you to come back as nice and good people...!” I said, making them all sob, but I wouldn't be waiting. I was going home as soon as I could. Really, I wanted to forget all this happened as soon as possible... *Oh hey, I could ask Niku to seal my memories maybe. I'll ask once we get home.*

Criminal Organization Administrator's Perspective

I'm Jondoe, a high ranking administrator of the Last Commune. Yeah, it's a common fake name.

I may be living in the slums now, but I used to be a good-hearted merchant working inside the city. Sure, I ended up as a criminal slave after stealing some of my boss's profits to keep for myself, but still. Everyone was doing it. Only reason I got in trouble was because everyone else lied and said I was the one taking all the money. Not my fault I ended up in the slums. I only took ten percent of the profits, y'know?

After fleeing to the slums, I used the skills I learned as a merchant to rise the ranks in the Last Commune. Ended up as the treasurer managing all of the organization's funds. Naturally, I was keeping some of it for myself, but not so much that I would get caught again.

Today the head of the organization had called for me, apparently to thank me for my hard work himself. I had only ever heard of the top dog through Hugo,

the second in command. He was supposedly a real monster, managing this whole organization that ruled the slums. What kinda guy was he? I couldn't wait to find out.

He summoned me to the best brothel in the slums. Cheaper brothels used tents (which were the prostitutes' homes), but this place had actual rooms. We were gonna meet in one of those rooms.

"Go in." Hugo was waiting by the door and let me in. Inside was a beautiful girl who fit my tastes exactly. She had long black hair and a flat chest. She was the kind of chaste, pure girl that had no place in the slums. But her eyes had the sharp, merciless look of someone who could stand at the top of a criminal organization and keep it in order.

There was no doubting it. She was the head of the Last Commune. I found myself so enraptured by her that I couldn't even move. She looked at me carefully as if ascertaining my worth and I felt a tingling pleasure rush from my toes to my head. Her eyes were falling directly on me. Could there be anything more blissful in the world?

"Ah... aaah..." I was so anxious my throat dried up. *For real? Am I a kid having his first crush?* I swallowed hard.

"Kneel before me." I immediately knelt. I couldn't resist her; I didn't want to. Ahhh, I was so happy.

"Uh, let's see... Your name's Jondoe, right? The treasurer?"

"Yes, that's me."

"Okay. Tell me what bad things you've been doing."

"Bad things? I haven't been doing anything bad."

"Going to play dumb too, huh? Come on. Why do all you criminals have to justify yourselves and pretend to be good people like that?" The girl sighed.

Aaah. If I had done anything bad, it was frustrating her just now. There was no greater sin than hurting her mood for even a moment.

"It may not be a sin if you don't realize it's evil. But it's bad to hurt others for your own benefit. Even if you don't hurt people directly, you're impacting the

world. You're hurting the people of Tsia, and that's bad. Now think back and tell me what you've done." Now that she mentioned it, I had been working for a store owned by a Tsia citizen. It was bad to steal his money for my own purpose. Indeed. I had done something wrong, something bad.

"People who do bad things are called bad people. What are you?"

"I'm a bad person."

"Good." I could now accept that I was a bad person. She approved of my growth as a person. I couldn't help but smile.

"Now then, Jondoe. What bad things have you done?"

"Right. I took money from my store's profits. But not very much."

"Not very much? I'm not asking about quantity here. I am just asking you what you did wrong."

"Right! Forgive me! I committed the evil act of stealing money." That was close. I almost started giving excuses. She would just hate me if I did that. I couldn't say that everyone else was doing it, either. Two wrongs did not make a right. It would just make all of us bad people.

"So in short, you did bad things and are a bad person."

"Well, I guess, basically..."

"I hate bad people." I flinched so hard my entire body lurched. She hated bad people, which meant... She hated me? No, no way, no way! I didn't want her to hate me. I started to sweat in panic.

"That's right. I hate how you are right now."

I wanted to cry. I hung my head, depressed.

"However." Yet, in all her glory she gave me hope. "However, bad people can become good people by atoning for their crimes."

"Atoning, for their crimes?"

"It's simple to atone for your crimes. If you gather proof of your wrong doings and turn yourself in to the guards, they will give you a punishment befitting your crimes. Apologize and accept the punishment. Once that's done, you will

no longer be a bad person. As long as you don't do bad things again, you will be a good person."

Would that really be enough for me to be a good person? Of course it would be! This girl would never lie to me! If I do what she says, I won't be a bad person anymore!

"Will you turn yourself in?"

"Yes! Right now, even!"

"...Uh, hold on. Do it with everyone else tomorrow. Use that time to gather evidence of your crimes and information on criminals you've done bad things with before. Okay?" Right, I couldn't turn myself in immediately if I needed to gather evidence.

"Understood!" I replied with joy from the bottom of my heart and strode out of the room. It would take me all night to gather all the evidence and information she wanted. But by doing so, I could become a good person. What was one night's work in the face of atoning for my crimes? When I got home, I would need to stick all my ledgers into a bag.

Also, there was a pig sleeping at that girl's feet. I didn't recognize them, but whoever it was, I was jealous of them.

Tsia Guard's Perspective

The sky was blue and the weather beautiful. The slum in front of me was as dirty as ever, but still. I could imagine that today would be yet another peaceful day where nothing happened. There was no doubt in my mind that absolutely nothing strange would happen today.

It was about then that a large group of people came walking toward the gate. They were all striding forward confidently. Those at the front were better dressed than I would have expected from slum dwellers. The person in the front especially looked like a noble.

Said noble-looking individual stepped forward and spoke to me, acting like the representative of the group.

“Aaah, excuse me. Could you get your boss for me?”

“Uhhh. What business do you have in Tsia?”

“We came to turn ourselves in. We are the administrators of the Last Commune.”

For a second I didn't believe what I had heard. The Last Commune was a criminal organization that controlled the slums and dragged Tsia City down with crime. Any guard working at the southern gate knew who they were.

“Did you not hear me? We came to turn ourselves in.”

It was incomprehensible. The Last Commune had grown so powerful that we were ready to burn down the entire slums to get rid of them. And yet, its leaders had come to turn themselves in. Not just one or two of them, either. Twenty of them. And again, these weren't low-ranking members. They were the top twenty of the organization.

The top dog was a noble, too. It was a scandal so large in scope that his entire family could have their rank stripped from them. I didn't know why he had come from the slums. But.

“Take us to prison already! We have the evidence against us right here!” he said, thrusting mountains of paperwork my way. I had no idea what to do anymore.

“W-Wait just a moment!” I rushed to get the captain of the gate. But he didn't know what to do either and ultimately sent a messenger to the villa of the commander of the southern gate... but he had left for the slums yesterday and hadn't been back since. I told that to the noble at the gate, who was actually sobbing while begging to be sent to prison.

“Idiot! I'm that commander! You don't even know what your own commander looks like?!”

“Wha...? S-Sorry!” There was no way I would know what my commander looked like when he was the kind of guy to leave everything to other people without ever going to work himself. I had never seen him in the flesh before.

“So, uh, what should we do then?”

“For now, put us in prison. Then go directly to the Archduke and tell him what happened!” The commander gave orders on how to arrest him. Thus, all twenty administrators were taken to prison with satisfied expressions on their faces. They were all obedient, and some of them had blissful, madness-tinged grins on their faces.

It took thirty minutes for Archduke Bonodore to hear of what happened. The evidence the administrators had brought with them was investigated and ultimately led to the capture of spies from other countries, criminals within the city itself, and even other nobles who had been partially funding the organization.

The situation would come to be known as “The Last Commune’s Change of Heart.” What had encouraged their sudden change of heart? Through interrogations (wherein they were surprisingly cooperative), each of the administrators spoke of various women who had helped them see the error of their ways. But the Archduke instructed us to dig no further, as there were more important things to do. No investigation was started to find those women, and in the end, their identities were never discovered.

Keima’s Perspective

It was the day after the Last Commune administrators all turned themselves in. I woke up in a Tsia inn. It was solidly noon and since I had only paid for one night, they kicked me out. But I still felt like the king of the world.

Reason being, I didn’t have to turn into a femboy Succubus and seduce perverted weirdos anymore. *If this isn’t the top of the world, what is?*

“Okay, Niku. Let’s go to the Archduke’s manor.”

“Understood.”

I figured that the buzz from yesterday would have probably calmed down by now. Or so I thought until I went to the manor and saw a bunch of people rushing in and out of the front gate. *Uh... Maybe I should’ve waited longer? Yeah, I’ll come back tomorrow.* But just as I started to turn around, a guard at the gate called out to me.

“H-Hey, you! Er, you’re the adventurer who came here earlier, right? Do you have business with the Archduke? You do, right?”

“...Ahhh, yeah. I do, but it seems pretty busy here, so...”

“Not at all! We’ve been waiting for you. In fact, I’ve been waiting since yesterday for you to come. After all, I’m the only guard who knows what you look like so... Er, the Archduke himself ordered me to stand guard here in case you came.” Maybe waiting as long as I did hadn’t been so nice after all.

“Right, good work. Uh... And sorry?”

“It’s fine, just please let me finish my job. Follow me.” The guard took me inside and I was taken to the same parlor that I’d been to about a week prior. Just as I was starting to lay on the sofa to get some sleep, Bonodore came walking in.

“Keima! I’m glad you came!”

“...Hello again, Archduke Bonodore. How are you?” Bonodore was wearing a full smile and looked very excited.

“No need for formal greetings! More importantly, all of the Last Commune administrators turned themselves in yesterday. It’s safe to say that was your work, yes?” I told him ahead of time that I would be taking down the entire organization. I had no reason to hide anything and thus replied with a nod. Immediately, Bonodore’s wings spread out wide and he held out a hand. I reached out a hand to give him a handshake but he went for a friendly hug instead. *He must be pretty happy.*

“You did great, Keima! So great we’ve been breaking our backs since yesterday. This is pain that feels fine, to be sure... What in the world did you do to them?”

“You promised not to ask that, Archduke.”

“Right, right. Forgive me.” Bonodore sat opposite me like before.

“Your work was unbelievable. I didn’t expect that you would actually destroy the organization. In a single week, at that.”

“...To be fair, I definitely wouldn’t want to do it again.”

“Which means you could if you wanted to, huh?” *Dealing with those perverts really messes with your mind. The more perverted and degenerate they act, the more your Succubus powers drain energy from them. It feels like eating the meat of a particularly nutritious animal.*

“...Between you and me, I expected at most that you would bring information that would at worst weaken a branch of their organization before our assault or at best identify which of my subordinates were dealing with them. Nobody could have predicted that the head of the organization would come begging to be sent to jail.”

“Was it a mistake to have them bring a bunch of evidence with them, then?”

“Not at all,” said Bonodore with a broad grin.

Man... Succubi really are overpowered when I think about it. If nobody has a high enough charm resistance, they can destroy a sizable criminal organization in a single week. Kosaki said in the past that I had the power to conquer a kingdom and it looks like she wasn't wrong. Not that I intend to try it.

“In any case, time for your payment. I'll send the money to you through the Guild, so now... I will give you information on the Divine Pillow.” *Finally! This is the reason why I worked so hard to take the Last Commune out from the ground up. Information on the Divine Pillow!* I tensed up and leaned forward, waiting for Bonodore to continue. “...The Divine Pillow is one part of the Divine Bedding set. They're all precious treasures to the Laverio Empire, so keep what I say here between us.” I nodded.

“I'll only say this once, so listen closely.” I swallowed hard.

“The Divine Pillow is in the possession of my daughter, Maiodore. At the direct request of the Ivory Goddess, the women of my house have taken care of it for generations. Therefore,” Bonodore continued, “the Divine Pillow is here in Tsia.”

Chapter 2

Archduke Bonodore's Perspective

My name is Bonodore Tsia. I'm the Archduke of Tsia.

On a day like any other, I was looking through the new edition of the nobility almanac. There I saw the name Goren, from a town that had been established just last year.

"Keima Goren...? Hm? I do recall the Town Chief of Goren being named Keima, but since when was he a noble?" Curious, I immediately got to figuring it out. The imperial capital's government would give information on nobles when requested. If he was a visad, a B-Rank adventurer and thus noble, information on his party members and his adventuring history would be public information. Generally a B-Rank adventurer would be fairly well-known and have accomplished many great deeds.

Several days after sending a magic letter, I got my reply. According to it, Keima Goren and his four party members were all B-Rank visads, with their accomplishments being the conquering of five different dungeons. The [Ivory Training Grounds], the [Cave of Greed], the [Ivory Beach], the [Bone Grotto], the [Triple Threat Grotto]... None were dungeons I had heard of, but each had been conquered by their party. The final three after becoming nobility, even. Two of the listed dungeons had been destroyed. In this country, it was punishable by death to destroy a dungeon without permission. Even kids knew that.

In other words, they were strong enough to have conquered two dungeons so dangerous that their destruction had been permitted. And on top of that... *"The Ivory Goddess guarantees his skill."* An extra line had been added to the end of the letter.

...Unbelievable. The moment I saw that, I froze and dropped my tea cup, leading it to shatter on the ground. Right next to Tsia, a man of this power is not

only building a town, but growing its size rapidly? And he is backed by the Ivory Goddess, known to everyone in the Laverio Empire? No matter how I thought about it, Keima was dangerous. But now that I knew about him, I had to act. *Ngh, my stomach hurts. This isn't going to help my balding...*

The reply also came with questions directed at us, from the imperial capital. They wanted to know about Goren Town and the Divine Pillow in Tsia's care. Simple questions, to be sure... But I wasn't dumb enough to overlook the message hidden within them. They were telling me to use the Divine Pillow as a trump card when dealing with Keima.

Now then, what was to be done? The town chief of Goren was simply passing himself off as a mere commoner, hiding his rank and status. He was held in high regard by his citizens. They said he was a skilled town chief and a monster of an adventurer. They said he was an honest holy man dedicated to saving others. They said he was a wise man blessed with intelligence and generosity.

Judging by the rapid rate at which Goren was growing, it was likely that all of those assessments were true. He had taken an undeveloped area of nothing and within a single winter grown a minor town to one of a frightening size. He was utilizing the nearby mountain dungeon as a mine to its fullest, facilitating trade and profit. That couldn't happen without a lot of good luck and a lot of talent. Incidentally, I was a personal fan of the Beddhist church and had purchased not only a holy symbol but a futon as well.

Regardless of the Ivory Goddess's backing, his accomplishments alone made him a man worth bringing into the fold. Well, there were rumors that he was a lolicon, but that wasn't uncommon among the nobility. That would even be advantageous for me, considering how young my daughter was.

I decided to meet Keima. When he visited my manor, I discovered that he was a polite young man with black hair and black eyes. He brought with him a well-kept dog beastkin slave. That must have been one of his party members, Niku Kuroinu.

What a horrible name. There was no doubt she was the source of the rumor about Keima being a lolicon. Though it was hard to tell if he was considered a lolicon because he kept her around or if he kept her around because he was a

lolicon.

“Kept you waiting, huh? I’m Bonodore Tsia. But maybe the Archduke would be more recognizable for you.”

“I’m Keima. This is Kuroinu. Please call her Kuro. It’s good to meet you, Archduke.” He knew proper manners. Well, he was making slight mistakes here and there, but he was showing proper respect for authority. He also didn’t seem to be afraid of meeting me, the Archduke.

Before giving him the quest which I had prepared for appearances, I made small talk with Keima. According to him, the town had hunted about thirty Iron Golems, but my information showed that forty Iron Golems’ worth of iron had been exported from his town. The total amount probably exceeded fifty considering what iron probably went under the radar.

Your average town chief would give exaggerated reports to try and look better than they are, but Keima spoke in a dry, uninterested tone that made it clear how little he cared for that kind of thing. While he was downplaying his accomplishments, too. That could be interpreted as him having accomplished so much that some Iron Golems didn’t mean anything to him.

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of my daughter Mai, so I began discussing the quest I had for him. On the surface, it was a quest to gather information on a criminal organization and guard Mai. In other words, it was a way to introduce the two of them. I wanted them to grow closer while he guarded her.

We already had all the information we needed to deal a heavy blow to the organization. It would be difficult to destroy them entirely, but we would probably come closer to it depending on the information Keima managed to get.

Mai left after being introduced to Keima and we got back to discussing the quest.

“I’ll warn you now, but if I don’t think the pay is worth it I will absolutely turn this quest down.”

It took a lot of guts to turn down a quest from the Archduke, doubly so to his

face. Things would be different if it was an immensely challenging quest like defeating a dragon or what have you, but judging from Keima's reaction he didn't consider the quest particularly hard.

"Yes, naturally. I believe this will be an offer you can't refuse, however." It was at that moment I had no doubt whatsoever that Keima was the same man that the Ivory Goddess herself vouched for. I dropped the Divine Pillow's name and Keima's expression dramatically changed on the spot. That was all the confirmation I needed. *Yep, he's easy to read. You've got a long way to go, Keima.*

"Unsatisfied?"

"...No, that payment is enough. I will accept the quest."

"Good, glad that we're on the same page here." I said with a smile.

"Naturally, I have a monetary reward prepared as well. Ten silvers as an advance payment. The rest depends on how much information you gather. If you fail and cause collateral damage, the fees will be subtracted from your reward, but I'm sure you're skilled enough for that not to happen." With that out of the way, we talked about expenses and the time limit. How much information would Keima be able to gather in a month? It was a largely meaningless quest I had given him for appearances, but I was still looking forward to how far he would go.

"Oh yeah, there's something important I forgot to ask. Mind if I ask one more thing?"

"What's that?" I looked at Keima and gave a fake grin.

"...You don't mind if I destroy the organization myself, do you?" My eyes widened, then I spread out my wings and laughed in amusement.

"Heh, hahaha! Of course not. Do what you can, and if you actually manage it, I'll help you get the Divine Pillow myself!"

"You sure? I'll destroy them even if you end up being the mastermind or something," he said with a smile. His expression made it clear he was fully confident that he could do just that.

“Feel free. I imagine the mastermind is a regional noble. I give you permission to take him down. Ah... But if someone in my family is the mastermind, I would appreciate you telling me ahead of time.”

“Okay, let’s make this official. I accept your quest, Lord Bonodore. Please wait for my report.”

“Very well then, Keima. I expect good things from you.” Truly, how far would he go?

I sent spies to follow after Keima and learn as much about him as possible, but they lost sight of him within minutes. That afternoon I heard a report from the southern gate that Keima had left the city.

...One week passed. Bizarrely enough, the administrators of the criminal organization I had sent Keima after all came and turned themselves in. It was unbelievable. The timing made it clear that Keima was responsible for it. But how in the world did he make all the administrators of a criminal organization turn themselves in with evidence of their crimes? Not to mention that the leader of the organization was one of my subordinates... I had long considered him suspicious, but even he walked readily into jail with evidence of his wrongdoings.

In any case, there was so much evidence that just confirming everything as true was enough to keep everyone busy. *Hurry back and explain this, Keima! We could use your help sorting through all this... Wait, things ended up like this because of his help.*

I ordered a guard who knew Keima’s face to stand guard at the gate to be ready for him, and in the end he came the next day.

“Keima! I’m glad you came!”

“...Hello again, Archduke Bonodore. How are you?”

I checked with him and got confirmation that he was responsible for the Last Commune administrators turning themselves in. His results were better than I ever expected. And he finished them off so quickly it made me question what we had been doing wasting our time investigating them so slowly. There would be some chaos following their sudden absence, but it would likely take some

time for another large criminal organization to form.

“You did great, Keima! So great we’ve been breaking our backs since yesterday. This is pain that feels good, to be sure... What in the world did you do to them?”

“You promised not to ask that, Archduke.”

“Right, right. Forgive me.” I sat opposite to Keima.

“Your work was unbelievable. I didn’t expect that you would actually destroy the organization. In a single week, at that.”

“...To be fair, I definitely wouldn’t want to do it again.”

“Which means you could if you did want to, huh?” In other words, he could repeat this feat as many times as he wanted. Just what I would expect from an adventurer who had the Ivory Goddess vouching for him. I wanted him working for me no matter what it took. *Or rather, I will have him working for me, no matter what.*

I didn’t know what Keima’s ultimate objective was, but I knew he was looking for the Divine Pillow. That was my way in.

“The Divine Pillow is in the possession of my daughter, Maiodore. At the direct request of the Ivory Goddess, the women of my house have taken care of it for generations.” *Okay. This is Keima we’re talking about. He’s a smart guy. Shouldn’t take long for him to realize what he has to do if he wants the Divine Pillow.*

Keima’s Perspective

The Divine Pillow was in Tsia. Or to be more accurate, it was in the care of the Tsia house. That meant it was in this city, or perhaps even in this manor. He could give it to me immediately if he wanted to.

“So... You’re going to give me the Divine Pillow?”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that, Keima,” said Bonodore with a shrug.

“Well, I seem to recall you saying that you would help me get the Divine

Pillow if I destroyed the organization for you.”

“Indeed I did. As promised, I will support you in your efforts to obtain the Divine Pillow.” *What’s going on here? Is he going to give it to me or not? I wish he would just give a straight answer.*

“There are two important factors to consider. My house has been directly requested to manage the Divine Pillow by the Ivory Goddess. We cannot go against our word and give it to an outsider. Furthermore, it is tradition that the women of the Tsia house manage the Divine Pillow.” Those two factors led to one simple conclusion. “You just have to marry into the Tsia house and the Divine Pillow will be yours.”

“...Marry into the Tsia house?”

“Indeed. I have no intention of breaking my promise to you. I will support you in this endeavor.” *Is this guy telling me to seduce and marry his daughter?*

“To show my support... Indeed. I will recognize your marriage with my daughter, Maiodore. In truth, I do not want her to marry just yet, but with a man of your caliber I have no reason to oppose it. In fact, I already discussed this with Mai yesterday.”

Well. That was definitely one way I could get the Divine Pillow. Probably the best way too, with the least amount of problems arising from it—If I didn’t already have Rokuko as my partner.

I was only gathering the Divine Bedding so I could become immortal and live with Rokuko longer, so without Rokuko there would be no point in getting the Divine Pillow. Naturally, I needed to avoid marrying Mai. Or at the very least, it wasn’t something I should do without discussing it with Rokuko first.

“Is that really the only way?”

“Why do you ask? Are you not satisfied with my daughter?” asked Bonodore, glaring at me. But it was clearly just for show and didn’t scare me at all. That was partially thanks to the mental strength I had developed over the past week, but it was also because his glare was like a warm smile compared to Haku’s murderous ones.

“...Isn’t Maiodore a bit young to marry?”

“The women older than Mai are already married. But in any case, she’s not young enough for her age to be a problem. I was twice as old as my wife when we got married.” It was true that even political marriages on Earth had age gaps that wide. At the worst of times, babies ended up married to adults, sometimes before being born.

“But that’s for nobles. I’m a commoner.”

“Well, even so, that won’t be a problem for you. You won’t be taking over as the head of the family, after all.” *Me being a commoner doesn’t matter?! In what world?! I mean, I know sometimes rich merchants end up married to minor nobles, and it shouldn’t really be a problem if I’m removed from the line of succession, but still.*

“In any case, you don’t need to hide yourself like that. I’ve heard the rumors about you. That you are romantically interested in children. That’s not uncommon for those in the nobility, you know.” *Come oooon! I’m not a lolicon, that’s just a rumor! Who the friggin’ hell told you that?! The spies from before? How useless can they be! Execute them already! Ah, sorry, I went too far there. Just cut their salaries in half or something.*

“It truly hurts my heart for my adorable daughter to become the target of a lolicon, but she is a noble. I will permit you to, ahem, do with her as you will after your marriage. You are skilled enough that I consider that a worthwhile sacrifice.” *Yeah, actually, kill whoever told that to you. He’s basically character assassinating me here.*

“Like I said, I’m a commoner. The world of the nobility is above my head. Also, those rumors are false.”

“Like I said, you don’t need to hide yourself. I know you’re already a noble.”

“Wha?” Bonodore had said that I was a noble with such clear confidence. There could be only one explanation. My other guild card. The B-Rank guild card Haku gave me made me an adventurer noble. How did Bonodore find that out? “...What do you mean by that?”

“Exactly what I said. Your name is in this year’s nobility almanac.” *Wait... What? Seriously? You’re telling me there’s a list of nobles called the nobility almanac? I mean, of course there’s something like that, wow. I didn’t expect my*

rank to get leaked like that. I guess he's so fine with me marrying Maiodore exactly because I am (technically) a noble.

Anyway, c'mon Haku, be more careful... Wait, I guess she was. She must have put my name in the almanac knowingly. If the almanac doesn't match up with the issued B-Rank guild cards, things could get bad. There are adventurers who are actually B-Rank, after all.

"Do you mind if I take a look at the almanac?"

"Not at all." Bonodore ordered a butler to bring the almanac. He left the room and returned not long after. The almanac was an impressive leather bound book, just like one you'd find in a library.

He placed it on a desk and I opened it, somewhat intimidated by its size. My party and I were apparently recorded in the section for new nobles. There were heads of families, there were upstarts who brought their house from peasantry to nobility, and... *Oh, there we are. Keima Goren... Wait, what?! Keima Goren? Not Keima Masuda? I know that my guild card just has Keima on it, but... Oh. I don't think I've ever told Haku my last name before. I guess Goren does kind of sound like a last name, since people name towns after themselves and stuff.*

Incidentally, beside my name was my rank, gender, age, relationship status, and all sorts of information. The almanac seemed like it existed entirely to facilitate marriage hunting, to be honest.

"Am I in it?" Niku peered at the book. She was there too, as Niku Kuroinu. Her last name was correct, which made sense given that was the name she was registered with.

"...I was quite surprised when I saw Kuroinu's first name. It is what it is, after all. I would sooner believe her gender was misprinted than that being her true first name. To think she truly is a girl," said Bonodore, scratching his cheek. I couldn't blame him. Who wouldn't be surprised to see essentially the words "sex slave" on a fancy list of nobles? When it came to men, by the way, niku was slang for "meat shield." There were many ways to write each name, so he considered the possibility that it was a misprint, though it would be unthinkable for such a mistake to be made and overlooked.

"Not one adventurer named Niku has risen to nobility in the history of the

empire. Almost everyone named Niku is a slave with no rank, and those who register with the guild change it to something else. Those who don't are gently told to reconsider by the kindhearted scribe recording their noble name. Did that not happen to you?" *Haku isn't kindhearted... She doesn't have a heart at all, actually.*

Maybe it would be better if I forcibly changed Niku's name against her wishes? At the very least, we could change the name recorded on the almanac. *It'd be a lot better if we gave her the nickname Kneesocks Kuroinu... No?*

Also, Rokuko and Ichika were in the almanac since Haku had given them B-Rank guild cards too. Rokuko's last name was Labyrinthart and Ichika's last name was Kuroinu. *Well... Looks like you're Niku's sister now, Ichika.*

There was a quiet knock at the door.

"Oh, excuse me. It seems Mai is here. I called for her after being informed that you had arrived. Come on in, Mai."

"Thank you. Hello, Keima. It's good to see you again," said Mai as she entered the room. She looked just like she did a week ago, with wings and blue hair that curved somewhat into drills at the bottom. I closed the almanac and turned to greet her.

"Yes, it's been one week since we last met, Maiodore."

"I heard that you not only accepted our family's quest, but even exhibited results far beyond what my father expected. Please accept my sincerest words of gratitude. Thank you very much." She was just as polite as last time. There weren't many people this sincere and polite in my town. Children of nobility were something else.

With our greetings finished, Maiodore plopped onto the sofa next to Bonodore.

"We were just discussing your marriage with Keima, Mai."

"My my! Is it settled, then? I suppose I should start addressing him as my fiancé."

"Hold it, Mai. You're not engaged yet. That's what we are discussing now.

Right, Keima?”

“Er, well, technically... But I’m still not on board with this engagement.”

“Oh? You want to skip the engagement and marry her on the spot?
Hahahaha!”

“My my, aren’t you a hasty one, Keima? Ahaha.”

No, I’m turning her down. Why are they both acting like I already said yes? I thought, just as Niku raised her hand.

“...May I speak?”

“Of course. What is it, Kuroinu?”

“He is rejecting the marriage in its entirety.” *SHE JUST WENT AND SAID IT! Niku smashed the flow of the conversation and said it straight up! I knew I could count on you, Niku! I love you so much!*

“Sorry, I couldn’t hear you. Would you mind saying that again?”

“I said he is rejecting the marriage.” *SHE SAID IT AGAIN EVEN THOUGH HE PLAYED DUMB! This is what I’m talking about, this is social competence personified... I thought I was more courageous now, but I see I have a long way to go. I was just being a garbage person focusing on self-preservation. I need to be more like Niku and just say what I mean, clearly and firmly.*

“...Keima? Is she speaking for you here?” He glared at me again, but as expected, it wasn’t that scary. It was nothing compared to the looks Haku gave me when she actually felt the urge to kill me. It was like the full moon versus its reflection in a muddy puddle. A nightmarish hellscape versus an air conditioned room in the summer.

“Yes, she said what’s on my mind. I don’t intend to marry your daughter,” I said flatly, which made Bonodore break out into a grin.

“I like you! Very well, I will honor your position on the matter.”

“To think you would be so courageous as to turn my father down... Keima, you’re so wonderful!”

W-Wait, what? Was turning them down the objectively best thing to do?

“I should expect nothing less, truly. Perhaps it would be different if you were of noble birth, but you are from a common birth. It is only natural that you would be opposed to marrying a woman you just met, especially one with as young and as small of a body as mine.” Maiodore was nodding repeatedly. *I guess she’s on my side here.* “I believe it will be best if you remain as a marriage candidate for now so that we might become engaged later when you are more comfortable with my youth.”

“Oh, good idea. You’re as smart as ever, Mai. Does that sound good to you, Keima?”

“Huh? Er, I do—”

“I would like to get to know you better, Keima. I would like to hear stories of your adventures ever so much. Please, oh please!” Maiodore leaned forward eagerly. Her eyes were sparkling with childish excitement and her wings were flapping. Bonodore had to hold her back.

“Do calm down, Mai. Now, Keima, do you remember your promise?”

“My promise? Uhhh...”

“The one you made with Mai, remember? You promised to tell her tales of your adventures while you serve as her bodyguard.” *That was just something Maiodore said while leaving, I don’t remember agreeing to it.* “I won’t force you to do that, but you still have to work as her bodyguard. It’s the second part of your quest.” *Right, the guard quest. We did talk about this ahead of time. They would be mopping up the remnants of the organization instead of destroying it, but that didn’t change much for me when it came to this part of the quest.*

“Your efforts have brought great change and, forgive my rude phrasing here, instability within Tsia. The remnants of the organization cannot do much with so many of their administrators gone, but they will likely cause some problems. I want you to protect my daughter for the next three days.”

“Understood. As you wish, Bonodore.”

“...So, you don’t need to answer right away. Or rather, I would prefer you not answer right away. Spend the next three days considering a marriage with Mai. In the meanwhile, you will be a marriage candidate. That sounds fair for us

both, doesn't it?" he said with a grin. "Just remember that I can't give you the Divine Pillow if you aren't engaged to her." *Well... There's no doubt that this is my best chance to get the Divine Pillow for myself. This opportunity will vanish if I just turn them down and leave.* I got the feeling that Bonodore was silently challenging me to find a way out of the engagement trap he had set for me.

"My guard duty with Maiodore begins right now, correct?"

"Keima. May I ask you something?" Maiodore slid back into the conversation.

"Certainly, Maiodore."

"That's exactly it! Couldn't you, um, be a little more warm and... call me just Mai?" asked Maiodore, cheeks blushing and fidgeting shyly. I glanced at Bonodore and he didn't seem to have an issue with it.

"...Errr, if you do insist, Mai."

"You do not have to be so formal, either."

"Forgive me, but around nobility I feel compelled to be more formal. It's just my personality. If you order me to stop, though, I can do my best."

"No, I quite understand. I am the same way myself. I won't force you. But just remember, if you ever wish to be more casual, know that I will always welcome it."

"Understood, Mai. I will remember that."

"Oh, and you may call me Mai as well, Kuroinu."

"In that case... Please call me Kuro, Mai."

"I see you are just as strict about being formal as Keima. Very well, that's quite alright."

"You don't mind a slave addressing you like that?"

"Of course. It is well known that you treat Kuroinu very well and consider her precious to you, Keima." *I mean, I'm using her as a dakimakura, but I guess I can't say that here. That would be actual suicide.*

"Hahaha... Well, Kuro is family to me so we sleep in the same bed sometimes. She definitely is precious to me, but I haven't, uh, laid my hands on her." I

fiddled with the truth to the best of my ability without lying in a last ditch effort to defend my honor.

“...Family? But her name is...” *Ah, yeah. The name Niku would throw anyone off.*

“A lot happened that led to her name being what it is. She ended up with it before I could name her. All I could do was give her a last name I can use in public.” I made it clear to Bonodore that I hadn’t given Niku her name. It was entirely true. Nothing but the truth. Not a lie in sight. Niku refused to change her name, not me!

“...I see now. Forgive my prior rudeness, Keima.” *Huh?* “It seems I misunderstood you. Forgive me. Will you accept my apology? Although I spoke out of ignorance, I accused you of being a pedophile.”

“Errr, uh, don’t worry about it.” I wasn’t entirely sure how, but his unjust belief that I was a lolicon had finally been vanquished. *Man, this feels pretty good. Heck yeah.*

“Thank you, Keima. Now, Mai. Please be good friends with Kuroinu. Actually, speaking of which. Do you like sweets, Kuroinu? We have sweets known as cookies here, made from the highest quality flour in Tsia and sugar from Pavella. I imagine Keima knows about them already.”

“Um... Master?”

“Ahhh, yeah, sure. Sounds good.” I didn’t want to owe him any favors, but well, cookies were a small price to pay after finally freeing myself of the lolicon rumors.

And so, we ended up having a tea party in the garden. It was basically like a park, visible from the front gate of the mansion. *Oh, that spot over there looks good for naps. I’ll have to remember that.*

Participating in the party was me, Niku, and Maiodore. Also a maid and a waitress. Naturally it would have been hard to breathe with Bonodore around, so he declined to participate. *That’s fair, since I came out of nowhere and took up a lot of his time when he’s busy already.*

“Now then, Keima, Kuro. Please have a seat.”

“Thank you. You sit too, Kuro.”

“Understood.”

Niku, Maiodore, and I sat around a circular table at equally distant points from each other. The girls had a much lower sitting height than me, so they sat on a bunch of cushions to boost themselves up. *Those cushions look like modified futons from our dungeon.*

“These cushions are being produced in your dungeon, I believe.”

“That’s right. The nuns in our town are making cushions like these out of futons.” Indeed. Our Beddhist nuns (Succubi) were tearing apart beds (futons) to make cushions. That could technically be considered as blasphemy, considering that the Divine Futon is an object of worship, but Beddhism is a religion of forgiveness. Really, sharing futons is a holy act in itself... Or that’s how I decided to interpret it, anyway. The cushions could be used as pillows if folded a bit, so everything was fine.

In the end, even butts deserved peace and comfort. We offered donut shaped cushions too, at a very affordable price. Oyasuminasai.

“The nuns in your town... Do you refer to Beddhism, then? What kind of religion is that? It’s not a name I have heard often.”

“Beddhism is a religion that preaches peace above all else. I’m more or less the pope. Kuro is a nun too.”

“What?! I had no idea. So you’re a man of religion, then.”

“I suppose so.”

Maiodore seemingly tensed up a bit. I would do the same after realizing I was talking to someone religious.

“By the way, when is the tea coming out?”

“...U-Um, are you not going to try to convince me to join your religion?” asked Maiodore, timidly. That explains her tensing up.

“Beddhism is a religion that says if you have the time to proselytize, you have the time to sleep instead.”

“Oh, I see.” Maiodore let out a sigh of relief. “Um, is it taboo to talk of other religions, then?”

“Not at all. Beddhism’s fine with just about anything as long as you’re not bothering other people.”

“I see. That is a relief. In the past I have been subjected to quite forceful proselytization attempts.” *Probably from the Church of Lux.* “That said, I would like to hear more of the religion which my fiancé adheres to.”

“Mai, we’re not engaged.”

“Oh yes, you are correct. But I wouldn’t mind at all if we were,” said Maiodore with a bright smile. “This is tea imported from the Holy Kingdom. Let us drink while we talk.” The maid stepped forward and gracefully poured tea into our cups. As expected from a maid serving an Archduke, she was clearly experienced and knew what she was doing. Niku, not knowing the proper manners for a tea party, was observing me closely. But honestly, I didn’t really know them either. I would just end up looking weird if I tried to force my Wearable Golem to act out the proper motions here. *Might as well be honest here.*

“I’ve never attended a tea party like this before. If there are any special manners I need to know, please tell me.”

“My my, you don’t need to worry about that.”

“I see. In that case, I’ll not worry about potentially being rude today.”

“Ahaha, so stiff. If only you would feel more at ease.” Maiodore took a sip of her tea first. “At tea parties and such, those who prepared the food eat and drink first as a symbolic gesture that it isn’t poisoned. If anyone brought food of their own, they eat said food first before the others do,” explained Maiodore for me. *Makes sense, you shouldn’t give food you can’t eat yourself to other people.*

I took a sip of tea. It tasted just like normal black tea. I wasn’t great at picking up subtle differences between tea. Niku saw me drinking and hurriedly did the same. Her ears drooped a bit, probably because she didn’t like it much. No surprise there, it didn’t have any sugar in it. She probably expected it to taste

better than it did thanks to the smell.

Soon, a plate of cookies was placed on the table. *Yep, these just look like normal cookies.*

“Let us eat.” As explained a moment ago, Maiodore took a cookie first and chomped into it. Niku reached out for a cookie before I could. *Ah, okay. She wants to eat one first to do a poison test of her own.* I reached over and patted her head. Her ears flapped happily as she nommed on the cookie. Seeing that, Maiodore put a hand on her cheek and let out a heartfelt sigh.

“I’m not sure how to say this, but. She is quite cute, isn’t she? It’s hard to describe, but she makes my heart feel warm.”

“Right? She means the world to me and my party.” Niku’s expression was as flat as ever, but her ears and tail made it clear how she felt. “That reminds me, you wanted to hear about my adventuring tales, right?”

“Yes, I would like to hear more about you.”

“In that case, well...” I thought back to see if I had any good adventuring stories, but really, I hadn’t done much adventurer things. Cleaning toilets, deliveries, hunting rabbits... Most of my actual stories involved dungeon stuff, which I couldn’t say in public. *Guess I’ll just make some stuff up.*

“To tell the truth, I haven’t really been on that many exciting adventures, so there’s not much for me to talk about. I know stories from other adventurers, though. How about those?”

“Yes, those will do just fine!” Her eyes were sparkling and her wings flapped. *Her being so easily excited makes her look really cute, just like the kid she is.*

And so, I turned some Japanese legends (adventury ones) into Beddhist bedtime stories. Of them, Mai was particularly fond of the Momotaro story.

“Then Momotaro, having tamed the dog, monkey, and pheasant, heroically defeated the village of ogres, making their treasure and magic stones his.”

“Goodness... The underwater dungeon Urashima Taro faced was quite something, but Momotaro’s story was much more exciting.” *Yeah, probably because Urashima’s story ended with him being eaten by a mimic treasure*

chest. It seemed she particularly liked the battle scenes in Momotaro. Also, Niku was also completely enraptured by the stories. I had gotten surprisingly into them and ended up giving fairly dramatic retellings of the spruced up stories.

“I do say, this might be the most calm tea party I have ever had.” According to Mai, she usually had to talk a lot more than she was now. Niku didn’t talk much, and if spoken to she generally just nodded or gave a short reply. I wasn’t sure what to say when not telling the bedtime stories. *But well, I guess a three person tea party won’t end up too noisy anyway.*

We continued our calm tea party. *Fwaaah... I’m getting kind of tired.*

“...It’s a bit late for me to ask this, I suppose, but does your religion permit luxuries such as tea parties?”

“Beddhism doesn’t forbid anything but bothering other people.” I seemed to recall Rei and the nuns joking about tea being forbidden in Beddhism, but it wasn’t actually. Sure, caffeine prevented sleep, but only temporarily. The Beddhist way was to hope that by drinking a warm beverage and relaxing the body, a better night’s sleep awaited.

“Goodness. In that case, is it even permitted to worship other deities?”

“Hahaha, that’s right. You knew about that?”

“Hm...?” Maiodore tilted her head, still smiling. Her long blue hair with curled tips shook a bit. *Ah, looks like she didn’t know. That was just her guessing.*

“The truth is, Beddhism can be practiced as a sub-religion while still practicing another religion.”

“...Truly? W-Would that not anger the god of Beddhism?”

“No. Beddhism doesn’t even have a god.” My explanation made Maiodore tilt her head further.

“...A religion, with no god?”

“That’s right. You can worship the Ivory Goddess, the Food God, the Smith God, the Dice God, whichever you want. Just remember not to bother people. Also, pray each night. That’s all Beddhism asks for.”

“Not bothering other people is one thing, but I see you have to pray each

night. That sounds like quite the task.”

“Not at all. Here, let me show you how to pray in Beddhism. I noticed a good spot for praying on the way here, and now’s a good time for a demonstration. Kuro, keep Mai entertained while I’m praying,” I said, intending to slip out of the tea party and take an afternoon nap.

The best part of Beddhism is that you can sleep whenever you want and nobody will judge you. It would be fair to say that’s exactly why I made the religion in the first place.

* * *

By the time I woke up from my praying (afternoon nap), the sun was already starting to fall.

“Keima, that was a magnificent prayer. We have a guest room prepared for you, if you would like to continue there.”

...I was a little surprised to wake up and see both Maiodore and Niku staring at me, but well, I was napping outside in a garden. I had to expect and forgive that an audience would form.

I scratched my head while Maiodore and Niku took me to the guest room.

“I will see you again soon, when it is time for supper,” said Maiodore before leaving once we were there.

...Looks like the bedding here is a futon. One from our dungeon, too. Didn’t expect to see them being used in a rich mansion like this. I guess futons are like, top tier stuff for nobles in this world.

“Master.”

“Hm?” Niku got close to me after we entered the room. Then, she whispered calmly.

“...We’re being watched.”

“Hm.” Niku stealthily pointed at a wall, from such an angle she couldn’t be seen doing so from the wall. *Alright, yeah, she definitely has some kind of skill that detects when she’s being looked at. Don’t know when she got it, though.*

Anyway... I know Bonodore probably wants as much information as possible on the guy who might be marrying his daughter, but still, this doesn't feel so great. I think I'll play a little prank on them. I sat on a soft-looking sofa, with my back facing the wall.

"C'mere, Niku."

"Ah...! Understood." Niku guessed what I was going for and sat in the same way I was. In other words, she sat on my lap with her small body fitting perfectly against mine. We really did fit right together. She had spent so many nights as my dakimakura that she was used to this.

"Nnn... Haah, Master."

"Good girl, good girl." I rubbed Niku's body all over and occasionally gave her tight hugs. Each time I did she let out a moan.

Wait... This isn't what I was going for at all. I was just trying to play around with her like a pet, to make the spy feel silly for watching us.

"Nah nah nah, I'm being silly. We definitely just look like a father and daughter playing around right now... We're family. This is fine!"

"...Family... Daddy?"

"Ohohoho." *Man, my kid's cute. I'll rub her some more.*

...Is this going to make them think I'm a lolicon even more than before? Well, whatever. My kid's cute, my kid's cute. Wait wait wait... She's not transformed into a succubus, right? I have the ring, right?

"Nmmm." Niku was rubbing her body against mine. *She really is like a puppy. Cute, cute, cute.*

In any case, we couldn't talk carelessly while being watched. Nothing better to do than play with Niku until someone came knocking. Or so I thought, moments before a loud bell rang out from somewhere. It was probably a bell signifying the time that could be heard throughout all of Tsia. A knock came on our door soon after.

"Keima, it's me, Maiodore."

"Uh, one second... Okay, come in." I sat Niku beside me before giving her the

go ahead. The door opened gracefully, then Maiodore came inside with a maid. That was the same maid that was at the tea party. She was probably Maiodore's servant in particular.

"It is time for supper. Shall we go to the dining room, Keima?"

"Oh, it's that time already?" *Alrighty then. I think I'll take the Archduke up on his offer. I wonder what kind of food they eat here? May as well take note and pass the info on to the inn.*

We arrived at the dining room, where there was a long narrow table. A ton of people could eat there all at once. Bonodore was already seated, along with three others. A young man, a woman, and a boy probably in the middle of puberty. *Guess that's his family.*

"Allow me to introduce my family, Keima. This is my eldest son Rondo, my wife Waltz, and my second son Jive."

"...Nice to meet you all. I'm Keima, town chief of Goren." *Yeaah, this is just like introducing your daughter's fiancé to the family first. Might as well be a job interview.*

Incidentally, the three of them didn't have wings. The color of their hair and their appearances made it clear they were the Archduke's children, but they inherited a lack of wings from their mother. It seemed that when beastkin and so on married between races and half-breeds were born, the children generally are the same race as just one of their parents.

I went to sit down and a butler pulled my chair back for me. Maiodore and Niku sat down in their chairs without blinking. It kind of threw me off, but I sat down too.

Then, the meal started. It wasn't as good as I expected. The bread was white, but the soup normal and salty. The meat inside was rabbit that had been blood drained. There was also salad, but who cares?

Overall, the meal was a lot more simple than I expected for an Archduke to eat. That said, whether due to the quality of the ingredients or the quality of the chef, the food had a very strong flavor that made all of the ingredients stand out. "This food isn't as extravagant as what you serve in your inn, I'm

sure. Disappointed?”

“No, it’s very well made and good food. The ingredients all taste great. The carrots in particular are very sweet.”

“I see. That is the best praise you could have offered. The ingredients we use are almost all grown in Tsia,” replied Bonodore, his grin widening. It was there that his eldest son Rondo spoke to me.

“Keima, you don’t look very muscular for an adventurer. Are you a wizard?”

“Well, something like that. I usually fight in the back row. I know a little swordplay, but just enough to buy time if something manages to get close to me.”

“Hm? That a fact? I heard you were a skilled warrior and was hoping to spar with you if possible.”

“You’re looking for Kuro, not me. She’s the strongest fighter in our party, despite appearances.”

“She certainly doesn’t look it. If she is a skilled fighter, I couldn’t imagine anything scarier. I wonder if she is just a good group fighter?” The eldest son Rondo seemed all about fighting. I couldn’t see his daily DP value since we were out of the dungeon, but he was probably a well-trained fighter. He definitely seemed confident.

Rondo’s interest shifted to Niku, which gave the second son Jive an opening.

“Hey, Keima. How do you hunt Iron Golems? Normal swords can’t cut through their iron bodies, right?”

“There’s lots of ways to kill them. Aim for their magic stone if it’s exposed, if not, hit them with magic... Using hammers to take them down with force is an option too. I know a C-Rank adventurer who uses a hammer on them.”

“Magic, wow. What kind of magic do you use, Keima?”

“Lots of long-range attack spells. Anything more than that is a business secret. The more an adventurer reveals their secrets, the easier it is for them to die, so please understand that I can’t tell you much more.”

“Ngh, but I’m so curious... Oh well.” The second son was more into magic.

Kind of embarrassing for a kid to still believe in magic. Just kidding, it's totally normal since magic actually exists in this world. In Earth terms he would be kind of like a programmer, a nerdy kid only interested in using his head.

Since Jive couldn't ask anything more since it would be putting me in danger, it was Waltz's turn, the Archduke's wife.

"I hear that you are skilled at business and managing your town, Keima. I would like to hear about how you grew your town so quickly. I would also like to hear about Beddhism."

"Ahaha, I'm nothing special at all. Business wise, there just happened to be a skilled merchant in our town. I'm leaving all that stuff to him. The town grew like it did because a nearby dungeon just happened to have Iron Golems, that could hardly be called my own accomplishment. Even Beddhism was only founded thanks to a bible discovered in the dungeon."

"Aha. So humble."

"It's all the truth."

With his wife assuaged, next was Maiodore.

"You have discovered many rare things within the dungeon, it seems."

"Yes, we've been quite lucky."

"What is the rarest thing you have ever discovered within it?"

"Hm, good question... Probably the Beddhist bible. It's filled with bedtime stories and the like, so given your love of adventures I imagine you would like it more than anything else." The conversations continued such that I was the last one to finish eating. Niku had finished eating as soon as possible and had been impatiently waiting for us to go back to our room.

With the meal done, I left the room with Niku. *I should probably send a letter to Rokuko now. Let's see, I wonder if I should write about the [Divine Pillow] and all this engagement stuff. Well... She's my partner. I should discuss this stuff with her, yeah.*

That night I wrote a letter to Rokuko before going to sleep. I decided to just send it when I woke up tomorrow. After casting {Purification} on myself and

Niku, we went to sleep.

Bonodore's Perspective

Despite trying to engineer a marriage between my daughter and Keima, he turned me down. He didn't budge an inch even when I glared at him with both the anger of a scorned father and mana for extra pressure. It was a glare of such intensity that a weak-willed individual would pass out and even a skilled merchant would break out in a cold sweat, but Keima didn't even blink. Just what I would expect from a man who has the Ivory Goddess's backing. It would be more surprising if someone who could destroy an entire criminal organization in a single week didn't have an iron will like that.

In talking with him I pressed for details and discovered a shocking reality. Niku Kuroinu, who was thought to be his sex slave, was in fact something else entirely. She was... his family. There was no mistaking it. Keima said so himself.

Thinking about it, they were both individuals with black hair and black eyes. Those colors were generally only found on Heroes, which meant they were descended from Heroes. It wouldn't be odd for them to be connected by blood.

To think about how rude I was, accusing him of being a lolicon due to his love for a family member! I should have known they would have extreme circumstances surrounding them given that her name is listed as Niku in the noble's almanac! Keima had not named her himself. That could only mean that Keima saved her after she fell into slavery. He brought her with him wherever he went so he could be with family. There was nothing suspicious about it whatsoever.

Kuroinu's first name was no doubt a sign that she had been through indescribably horrible experiences. Would it be right to make a girl that young sleep alone at night? Absolutely not! There is nothing wrong with little girls seeking the warmth of their family! I apologized immediately. Keima forced a smile and accepted my apology, but I knew that no words could make up for my rudeness. What could be done about this?

After the tea party was done, I received a report from a spy I had foolishly forgotten to summon back from Keima's room. According to him, Kuroinu called

Keima “daddy,” while he referred to their relationship as a “father and daughter” relationship.

...No father in the world would reject their daughter’s request to sleep in the same bed as them! The rumors that he took her to his room at night often made sense in light of this. If possible, I would have liked to do the same with Mai. Perhaps I could if I were a commoner? Regardless, I couldn’t give up my position as Archduke, no matter the cost.

According to the noble almanac, Keima was single. Perhaps his wife died before him. The almanac often didn’t record information regarding one’s life prior to becoming nobility. I wanted to know the details, but... I ran the risk of antagonizing him by digging further.

I ordered the spy to return to his normal duties. There was no more need to spy on Keima in his room.

Keima ate dinner with us afterwards. I introduced him to my family and served a meal that our head chef put his all into (though to be honest, we only had the one chef and his apprentice). He was the pride of Tsia, the greatest chef in the region... But it was well known that Keima served rare, delicious food in his inn. A chef of extraordinary talent apparently worked in his country inn. I could only imagine what secrets lurked behind their true identity. It would be impossible to tell which chef was better without directly comparing their food, but it was possible that they had the legendary skill {Ultra Cooking} said to have once been held by the Food God Ishidaka. Or not.

Keima engaged in fruitful conversation during the meal, acting friendly with my family. It did indeed feel like an act, however.

“Still, you know some swordplay. How about a mock battle after we finish eating?”

“Ahaha, surely you’re joking, Rondo. I wouldn’t last a second against you.” I wished that Rondo would focus more on his studies than his swordplay, considering he will be inheriting my position. Regardless, Kuroinu was a surprisingly large child given Keima’s age, but just how old was she really? Her mother must have been a dog beastkin, but I had never heard of dog beastkin growing particularly fast. Which meant that Keima must have been older than

he looked. Perhaps he had elf blood in him on top of Hero blood.

...Some said that the Ivory Goddess is a high elf, proven by her unchanged beauty from the founding of her empire. Perhaps Keima was descended from the Ivory Goddess? No, no, that could never be the case.

Keima's Perspective

The next day. I woke up to a bright and sunny morning, which made me sleepy again.

"Okay, as of today, I'm Maiodore's bodyguard, but what does that mean for me? Should I get up now? Should I go back to sleep? Something tells me I should go back to sleep."

Suddenly, a knock came at the door. *Yeah, figures. It's breakfast time. I know.*

It was Maiodore knocking. *Guess I've gotta get up since I'm her bodyguard. The hard thing about being a bodyguard is that I can't sleep more than the person I'm guarding. Taking this quest was a big mistake... Haaah. But there's no going back now. Gotta get up.*

"Keima, I would like to go out today. Please prepare for our departure."

"...You're going out? To where?"

"The city. I intend to visit the orphanage."

"...Let's ask Bonodore for his permission first."

"In that case, we can ask him at breakfast!"

I took Niku and followed after Maiodore. She took us to the dining room, where only Bonodore was already seated. Everyone in his family was so busy that they rarely managed to eat breakfast together, it seemed.

Breakfast was freshly baked round bread with eggs, boar bacon, and salad. A simple, classic breakfast. The tomatoes in the salad had a nice and strong flavor.

"Now then. Do you have any plans for today, Mai?"

"Yes, I was planning to visit the orphanage with Keima."

“I see. That might be a good opportunity for you to better understand what duty we as nobles bear. As for your guards... Hm, I suppose you don’t need any with Keima around.”

“As her guard, I would like her to stay in the mansion without putting herself at needless risk until the situation settles down.” I wanted him to turn her down so I could sleep. Ideally he would tell her no, since it would be dangerous, but...

“Hm? Well, there is some commotion right now, but that primarily has to do with all the paperwork. We have already finished suppressing the cells of criminal activity reported in the evidence. There won’t be a problem with her simply walking through the city. Especially with a skilled bodyguard protecting her, no?” said Bonodore, looking at me. *Yeaah, figures. We’re two crazy strong adventurers that jumped into a hive of villainy and destroyed a criminal organization on our own, after all. What a pain. But really, given what I know about this guy by now, he’ll probably send stealth bodyguards to follow us from behind.*

“In terms of danger, the city has by now returned to how safe it was before the Last Commune arose. You could even say it is more peaceful than before, since the criminal remnants are restraining themselves to avoid attention. I have no reason to stop her with you two at her side. She goes to this orphanage quite frequently, after all.”

...And so, Maiodore’s plans were made into reality.

“Let us leave at once, Keima!”

“Sure. Where’s this orphanage, then?”

“This way!” said Maiodore, taking my hand and pulling me down the road. *Er, please stick beside me, I’m your bodyguard.* As Maiodore got all excited like a kid, Niku held out her hand.

“Lady Mai. Your hand.”

“Oh my, Kuro. Friends holding hands while walking is so childish I would be deathly embarrassed to do so in public.” *I mean, you’re still a kid.*

...Maiodore glanced in my direction. “However, I would be quite fine holding hands with my fiancé, Keima.”

“You’re forgetting that I’m just a candidate, Mai. And sorry, but as your bodyguard, I need to keep both hands free. I’ll have to ask you to hold Kuro’s hands.”

“If you insist so strongly, I suppose I can do nothing else,” said Maiodore while taking Niku’s hand, still walking. Niku would be able to pull her and flee while protecting her in the event of an unlikely ambush. As long as nobody on Leona’s level showed up, we were safe.

The orphanage was built into a church. One first had to enter the church before going to the orphanage. A priest greeted us at the door, which meant he had probably been informed of Maiodore’s arrival ahead of time.

“Keima, this is where the venerable founder of the Laverio Empire, the Ivory Goddess, is worshiped. Now then, let us pray.” *Haku’s Ivory Church, huh? Woooow. Thank you, Ivory Goddess, I owe you everything* (monotone).

My mockery was interrupted by the priest joining our conversation.

“...Could it be that you are not of the Ivory Church?”

“That’s right. I belong to the Beddhist church. We’re on good terms with the Ivory Church, however, and we worship a god that protects our night’s rest while valuing peace and relaxation.”

“Beddhism, I see. I have heard of Beddhist followers growing in number throughout Tsia. The emphasis on night’s rest leads me to believe your church branched off from the Dark God’s church. In which case, there is no doubting your friendly relationship with the Ivory Church.”

“Uhh, yeah, you’re exactly right.” *Let’s go with that. I’m the pope, so everything I say is true.*

“Please, take your time.”

“Yes, thank you.” I wasn’t sure what kind of praying posture this church had, so I mimicked Maiodore and got on one knee with my hands clasped in front of my chest. *May this end soon so I can go home already, amen.*

...Yeah, something tells me Haku’s not gonna listen to that prayer. We’ve got a long road ahead of us.

We headed to the orphanage after finishing our prayers. Once inside, we could hear the loud noise of children shrieking excitedly. *Calm down, sheesh. Learn from Niku... ah, wait, she's going a bit too far in the other direction.*

“Ah, it’s Lady Mai!”

“Wow, it is! Lady Mai! Lady Maaaai!”

Small kids either as small as or smaller than Niku and Maiodore gathered around us with smiles. There was a wide range of species from beastkin, humans, elves, and probably dwarves. Sounds kinda weird to say this, but they all looked surprisingly clean and neat. I had thought the same at the slums. This world’s {Purification} just changed everything.

“Who’s this guy, Mai... um, Lady Mai?”

“Oh, well.”

“I’m an adventurer working as Mai’s bodyguard. Same goes for this other little girl.”

“You look real weak for a bodyguard. And how’s a tiny girl like this gonna guard anyone?” *Idiot, Niku’s stronger than me. Part of her strength is that people underestimate her for being a kid. Watch out, bud.*

“We don’t look like much, but we’re still D-Rank adventurers. But either way, as long as we don’t go to the slums or something, I’ll be more than enough to protect her.”

“Oh, coooool.”

“Anyway, I’m a bodyguard. Gimme some space and go talk to Mai.”

“Okaaaay.”

Y’know, I don’t think I’m that good with kids. They tend to kinda look down on me. I mean, I’m not saying we’re all low-IQ or anything, it’s just that... Uuuuh.

Anyway, Maiodore seemed pretty popular with the kids. The fact she knew all their names and recognized them despite being a noble showed just how often she came.

“Keima, would you like to play with us?”

“Nah, I’m good. I’m just gonna relax in the shade over there.”

“Hey, hey, Lady Mai! Let’s go play minotag! Minotag!”

“Certainly, certainly. I’ll be off playing then, Keima.” And off they went, running around playing something that resembled tag. You lost if your back got stabbed by a stick held by the one who was “it.” Mino came from minotaur.

...Yeah, no thanks. That’s a bit too much running around for me. I glanced to the side and saw that Niku was eager to... not join. *Can’t say I’m surprised. Niku’s not really a normal kid, in more ways than one.*

“You don’t want to join?”

“...Well. I would win in a second. That wouldn’t be fun. For me or them.”
Alright, I get it. They’re on completely different levels. That’s fair. But some of the kids heard her and came looking for a fight.

“Y’know, we’re gonna be adventurers when we grow up!”

“We won’t lose that easily! I can even last five minutes against adults!”

“.....” Niku swiftly stood up and gently took one of their hands.

“Wh-What’s with yo— Whoa!”

“Finished.” Niku tossed the kid over her shoulder and chopped his back.

“S-Surprise attacks aren’t fair...”

“Are you going to say that to a real minotaur, too?” asked Niku, making the boy fall silent. *I mean, a real minotaur’s not gonna trick anyone with its appearance, but alright. She’s established herself as stronger here.*

But Niku had dug her own grave. By showing that she was so much stronger than them that they couldn’t even touch her, all the kids who wanted to be adventurers when they grew up surrounded her in awe. They called her awesome and asked her to teach them how to be strong too. *Hey, don’t look at me. You dug this grave, climb out of it yourself.* Some experience with kids her age would be good for Niku anyway.

Maiodore, freed from the kids thanks to their shift in attention, came walking over. She laid a handkerchief next to me and sat in the shade.

“Haaah. Goodness, these children simply do not know how to contain themselves.”

“Well, that’s kids for you.”

Maiodore’s voice was bright and cheery despite her complaints. At the end of the day, playing with kids her age was just fun for her, no doubt.

“The majority of children here are the children of adventurers.”

“Oh yeah?” *Well, figures. If anyone would leave orphans behind, it’d be adventurers. I wonder if some of these kids are those of people who died in my dungeon...* That line of thought made me feel conflicted.

“To the east of Tsia is a dungeon known as the [Flower Garden of Light]. These children will find their vengeance there.” That wasn’t a name I had heard before. *Guess my dungeon isn’t involved here, at least.*

“...There’s a dungeon to the east of Tsia?”

“Oh? Did you not know? It is famous enough to be known as [Tsia’s Dungeon], you know.”

I’d had no idea. I was so focused on my own dungeon that I never really looked into that kind of thing.

“Are you aware that cities and dungeons are fundamentally intertwined in the Laverio Empire?”

“That’s the first time I’m hearing about that.” I knew that the top of the empire was a Dungeon Core, but that wasn’t what she meant.

“In the Laverio Empire, cities are nigh universally constructed as dungeon cities. There will always be a town founded beside a large dungeon, which is precisely why adventurers thrive here as they do.” *I had no idea. Which means... this city was built right next to the [Flower Garden of Light], with the [Flame Caverns] not too far away at Tsia Mountain. Though given how the caverns are wedged between here and Pavella, the [Flower Garden of Light] is probably the main dungeon here.*

“Incidentally, you will primarily find plant and insect monsters in the [Flower Garden of Light]. You could say that it is thanks to them that Tsia is well known

for being the breadbasket of the empire,” explained Maiodore proudly. Her wings were flapping happily. The wings of an avian flapped just like Niku’s beastkin tail did.

Once the conversation trailed off, Maiodore suddenly realized something and blushed.

“Hm...? What’s up?”

“Oh, nothing. It’s just... How mean of you, Keima.” *How mean? What’d I do? Is the automatic translator messing up again?* “There’s simply no way that a skilled adventurer such as yourself wouldn’t know what dungeons exist in Tsia. Gracious, Keima, for a second I thought I knew something worth teaching to you... Oh, I’m so embarrassed!” She hit her hands against my side. It didn’t hurt at all.

“There’s actually a lot I don’t know. I really appreciate you telling me about that dungeon, Mai.”

“...T-Truly?”

“Yep. I may be an adventurer, but I don’t know everything. It’s also important to hear information from multiple different sources before making a conclusion.”

“I would like nothing more than for my words to be of use to you, so consider me relieved if that is the case.” *Well, I actually didn’t know, so yeah. That’s probably information the guild doesn’t tell to D-Ranks.*

Once our discussion about dungeons came to a close, Maiodore looked at me and asked about something else.

“...Um, Keima. I am providing financial support to this orphanage myself. What do you think about it? Does it seem like I am merely funding it for propaganda reasons?” asked Maiodore, looking uneasy. It wasn’t hard to guess that someone had accused her of that in the past.

“Are you doing it for propaganda reasons?”

“No! I wouldn’t dream of exploiting children for that purpose. But some accuse me of such.”

“Then why worry? Listen to what other people say, consider their ideas, and leave it at that. If they’re wrong, that’s that,” I said, which seemed to relieve Maiodore a bit.

“This orphanage has long been here, but the children happily say with smiles that my support has given them more food.”

“Kids not starving is a pretty good thing. See? You’re fine.”

“True. Um... Keima. I would like to continue supporting this orphanage even after getting married.” Maiodore was fidgeting, as if saying something she would rather not.

“What’s the problem with that? Seems reasonable to me.”

“Um. It’s about the money. At the moment I am receiving said money from my father, but once married, I will need to ask my husband instead. In short, Kei —”

“I see, you’re worried about relying on other people for money.” I’m not gonna let you call me your husband. Actually, I should use this opportunity to act like greedy scum and make her hate me. I feel like she has so many love points for me somehow that she’s going to overwhelm me with affection otherwise. That said, I’ll need to hold back a little so she doesn’t hate me too much. I still need that Divine Pillow. “In that case, you’ll just need to make money yourself. Or better yet, use the orphanage to make the money in the first place.”

“You suggest I use the orphanage to make money?”

“Yep. That way the orphanage can support itself even if you do lose the ability to fund it. I’m not a fan of dumping money endlessly into a pit with no returns.”

“But for an orphanage to make money... they would have to sell the orphans, no?” *That’s the first thing you think of? Really? I mean, same for me, but come on.*

“You have the right idea with selling things, but if they sell the orphans, that’s that. They’ll run out of money and they won’t have anything else to sell. Basically, I’m not saying to enslave them or anything. You can just introduce them to the market in general. Have them work at food stands, have them

make trinkets to sell, that kind of thing. They can even work in the fields. Anything that gives them the life skills necessary to survive without turning to a life of crime or relying on you.”

“The skills, to survive?” Mai put a hand on her mouth and fell into thought, worried. *Perfect, she’s getting uncomfortable.*

“That’s better for you, since you don’t have to worry about the orphans starving without you, right? And you won’t have to keep giving them money for every little thing. Even if things go bad, they’ll survive, considering that the orphanage was running before getting your support. But you know, thinking up all these methods to make money is pretty annoying. I can ask a merchant in my town to teach them how the market works. That’ll definitely go well.” *Heheh. Look at me trying to abandon these orphans and despair at my greed.*

“I see! We could hire a merchant to teach them!”

“Huh? Uuuh, yeah, that could work.” *How’d she get that from what I said? Alright... Gotta act even more greedy!*

“You can lend them a starting fund under the terms that they’ll give it back if they make money. Do it properly and you can make a lot of interest off them. You’ll be swimming in free money instead of losing it. Though you’ll lose the starting fund if they fail.”



“I see, I see! If they fail, we could consider the starting fund as simply more financial aid. I will handle the paperwork necessary to give them access to trade and the like. This certainly seems fun.” With the Archduke’s daughter throwing her weight in the ring, it was hard to imagine any amount of red tape getting in their way. With that in mind, it was likely that merchants would be falling over themselves to pay for the orphans services so that they could sell whatever they wanted wherever they wanted. *Wait... Does that mean I’m setting them up for success, not failure? Hahahaha, naaah. Making money’s not that simple. Only skilled merchants like the one at my town can guarantee profits from an investment.*

Buuut if this somehow does succeed, that’d be kind of a pain for me. Let’s pull back a bit.

“Uuuh. But if your goal here is just to make yourself look good, or to give the orphans more time to play, then just handing over money like you have been is fine too.”

“.....”

“You should do what you think is best. This isn’t my job, after all.”

“...Yes, you’re right.” Mai fell into thought. *Well... Did it work? Did I mess up? This is a pain. Nothing will come from worrying about it, though. Guess I’ll go save Niku.*

Hey! Back off, kid! That’s my dakimakura, stop trying to stick boogers on her!

* * *

We left the orphanage and began walking down a well-kept, peaceful-looking street. We weren’t sneaking around so we didn’t need to hide. It felt good for a change.

“Keima, would you like to stop by that store?”

“Huh...? Oh, the greengrocer?” *Now that I look, I think that’s the place I bought an apple at forever ago. It was pretty sour.* “Do you want an apple or something?”

“Yes. Excuse me, may I have a moment?”

“Welcome, welco— L-Lady Maiodore! Welcome to my humble store!” The store owner shot up straight the second he saw Maiodore. That was probably reflective of how often Maiodore went on walks throughout the city.

“May I have some of this fruit? As much as this much money will buy.”

“Absolutely! Thanks again!”

Maiodore handed a silver to the store owner. He left the counter and went to the storage room in the back.

“Here you are! Have’m all!” He came out carrying a barrel full of bananas. *Uh... Is she going to hand those out or something? Maybe she should have bought those before going to the orphanage. And wait, I’m the only one with her right now. Is she gonna make me carry that barrel?* I glanced to my side and saw Niku wagging her tail as if to say “leave it to me.”

But a second later Mai used {Storage} to vanish the barrel away. She then looked at me with pride.

“Ahahaha. Indeed, I know how to use {Storage}. I eat these at home, but there are so many that I will donate them to the orphanage the next time I visit.”

“That’s a good idea. Time’s stopped in {Storage} so it’s a good fit for transporting food that rots easily. Not to mention that it’s convenient for not having to carry big barrels around.”

“...You do not seem very surprised, and you are well informed. Have you seen {Storage} before?” *In fact, I use it all the time. Not that I’m going to say that. It’s apparently a pretty expensive skill overall. Uuuuh, alright, time to hide the truth and manipulate information.*

“I’ve seen the Ivory Goddess using it.”

“...You never cease to amaze me, Keima.” *Shouldn’t it be the Ivory Goddess that’s amazing you?*

I glanced at Niku and saw her tail hanging sadly, her enthusiasm for carrying the barrel having gone unrewarded. *You really wanted to carry those bananas, huh? There there. Cheer up, I’ll buy a bunch for you.*

We left the greengrocer and went back to the main street. She had no destination in mind and just wanted to wander around aimlessly, but to tell the truth, we were being followed. Niku was the one who noticed and warned me, again.

There was an adult man in a raggedy-looking outfit who looked like a thief, and beside him were two people who looked like normal citizens. *Hm. They're probably bodyguards the Archduke sent to follow us.*

As proof of that, they hadn't messed with us at all. A true thief would have attempted to exploit one of the many opportunities for kidnapping Maiodore that had surely presented themselves. But this was actually perfect for me. Maiodore seemed like she still wanted to go all over the place, but I wanted to go back to the mansion and sleep. I woke up early today, after all.

"Mai, let's go back to the mansion."

"Awww, but I don't want our date to end yet... Must we go home?"

"Yes. Also, I'm your bodyguard, not your date. Basically... Take a stealthy look behind you. That thuggish-looking dude is watching us."

"What?! R-Really...? Is he a remnant of that criminal organization?" *Definitely not.*

"In any case, the safest thing to do here is to go home. Don't you agree?"

"M-Mmnnn... You could just send them running in an instant, couldn't you Keima?"

"My job is to protect you from danger, not create danger. If necessary, you will be carried back to the mansion."

"Oh! W-With a princess carry, then? Also known as a bridal carry?" It seemed that both our worlds had a princess well-known for being carried in a specific way. Maiodore fidgeted in place for a bit, twisting a roll of her blue hair in her finger while thinking, then looked at me with steely determination.

"I-In that case, p-please do!"

"Okay then... Kuro, please carry her for me. Just lift her right up, with your arms like this."

“Understood.”

“Wha?!”

I mean, I never said I'd carry you myself.

Maiodore's eyes widened in surprise as Niku hefted her up into a princess carry. Her Wearable Golem was finally doing what it had been originally made to do.

* * *

Niku set Maiodore down once we arrived at the mansion. We had easily shaken off the guards following us. They had to remain stealthy, whereas we could run straight forward with the assistance of our Wearable Golems giving us nigh infinite stamina. An easy and natural victory. Though... my hip joints hurt a little.

“Oh, quite the speedy one, I see. And I didn't shake in your arms at all. You are stronger than you look, Kuro.”

“Eheh.” Niku puffed out her chest in pride, though her expression remained as flat as ever. *I guess this is one of those things where she's expressive in every way except her actual expressions?*

“...I would have liked Keima to bridal carry me, though.”

“Unfortunately, I'm not that strong. I leave all the heavy lifting to Kuro.” Niku looked weaker than me, but even without Golem Assistance involved I wasn't as strong as her. She was pretty strong, especially thanks to being a beastkin.

“Please bridal carry me yourself next time, Keima, if you would be so kind.”

“If the opportunity arises, I will consider it.”

“As time goes on I will only be growing bigger. Now is your chance to carry me while I am still light.”

“That won't be a problem. I may not be strong, but I won't have any issues carrying a full grown woman.”

“Ahaha.”

“Hahaha.”

Maiodore laughed with a hand over her mouth. *This loli's tiny, but she's a noble down to her bones.*

"Now then, let's go report what happened to Bonodore."

"Would you be a dear and bridal carry me to Father's room, then...?"

"Emergencies are one thing, but far be it from me to touch a lady when the time does not demand it."

"Mnn. But I don't mind." *You should! Anyway, I'm tired. Let's get this over with.*

I headed to Bonodore's office with Niku and Maiodore in tow. I knocked, then entered after being told to do so. Inside was Bonodore sitting at a desk and doing paperwork. He set his pen down and looked at us with a smile.

"We have returned."

"Welcome back. That was quite fast. I would have expected you to play for a little longer."

"Well, some fishy-looking guy was watching us, so we cut it short. No doubting they were from the Last Commune."

"...I think I'll need a description of those fellows." I had no reason not to tell him, so I gave a simple description of the group. Bonodore nodded without blinking. *Yeah, they're definitely guards Bonodore sent. The perfect excuse for me.*

"Surely you understood, Keima."

"Sorry, no clue what you're talking about."

"If you insist."

In any case, that was it for Mai going outside today. I successfully managed to take a peaceful afternoon nap, for religious reasons. Once that was done I had dinner with everyone, just like yesterday, and my bodyguard duties for the day were over.

Incidentally, I went with Beddhist bedtimes stories for that evening's dinner, but Bonodore had observed a Beddhist before and knew the one I told. *Time for*

bed.

* * *

The sun rose. Once again the weather was great, which meant it was a good time to go back to bed.

Or so I thought, right before Maiodore came knocking once again. *Uh... Don't tell me you want to go out again.*

"Let us go out again today, Keima." *Figures.*

"...Ideally I would like to have an easy day of work here and there."

"We went home early last time, so today we will finish what we started!"

Long story short, we were going back to the city.

Permission? Bonodore gave it in a second, of course. Clearly he's out of his mind, doesn't he remember that some suspicious people were after us yesterday? Wheeew, this region's Archduke is one wildcard.

"So, where do you want to go today?"

"I believe there is a market being held today. I received my allowance so let us go and buy plenty of things!" Maiodore skipped to the market, holding Niku's hand once again.

But along the way, someone appeared to block our path. She had defiant, confident eyes. Long blonde hair that reached down to the middle of her back. She was a girl that looked about fifteen years old in a white dress.

Indeed... It was Rokuko!

"That's right. Here I am, Keima." Rokuko was standing in the middle of the street, head held high. Beside her was Ichika wearing a maid outfit, whom she had probably brought for protection. That was our inn's work uniform, but it stood out among the city scenery pretty hard. It was a bit too fashionable, and despite the knee socks covering the color of the skin, the skirt was just a bit too short.

I asked Maiodore to excuse me for a second, then walked up to Ichika, who was yawning.

“...Why’d you come here?”

“I mean, not like I could stop her, dude. The second she saw that letter she was all outta there.”

“Hey! Why are you talking to Ichika and not me?” said Rokuko with a pout. “What, are you saying I shouldn’t have come? Obviously I’m gonna come. You disappear for a week and then you’re talking about some kind of marriage proposal. How could I talk about something that serious through letters?”

“Okay, fair. Guess we can have a serious talk about it now that you’re here.”

“I mean... We’re partners, right?” said Rokuko, blushing and looking the other way in a pout.

“Well, anyway, I’m glad to see you again. It’s been too long, I missed you. The stuff I’ve been doing here really grinds down your soul...”

“...Um, what’ve you even been doing, Keima?” she asked, looking exasperated. To be honest, I didn’t know why I had gone so far for them myself.

“Went ahead and destroyed a criminal organization called the Last Commune. Using... using charms.”

“I’m guessing you didn’t make Niku do that, which means you used Kosaki yourself, didn’t you? When we get home I want to see you in Succubus form, okay?” *Whoa, whoa, whoa. I don’t want her to see that.*

“Well, whatever. So that blue little girl’s, um, the one you might get engaged to?”

“That’s right. I summarized it in the letter, but she’s managing the Divine Pillow.”

“...Okay, so you’d be marrying her to get your hands on part of the Divine Bedding.” Rokuko figured out the situation pretty fast. I had already written about it in the letter, but still, that didn’t always equate to understanding.

“...Are you going to? Like, marry her.”

“I don’t intend to, so I’m looking for a way out right now,” I said firmly enough that Rokuko let out an impressed noise.

“Well, anyway, introduce me to that blue squirt first.”

“Uhhh, sure.” I returned to where Maiodore had been waiting for a bit, with Rokuko and Ichika right beside me.

“Who might these two be, Keima?”

“My party members Rokuko and Ichika. You two, this is the Archduke’s daughter, Maiodore.”

“Hmmm. Hi. I’m Keima’s partner, Rokuko. Can I call you Mai?”

“Feel free, Rokuko. Same to you, Ichika.” Rokuko and Mai exchanged a handshake. Rokuko was acting pretty smug for some reason. Ichika introduced herself and that was that.

“By the way, where were you three heading?”

“To the market. There will be no better way to keep an eye on the town than investigating the market. With Keima at my side this even feels like a date.”

“Oh, a date, huh? You wouldn’t mind me joining you three, would you?”

“My my. Keima, won’t it be more difficult to do your job with more people to protect?” *I can already see the sparks flying between them. But I’m on Rokuko’s side. Though I’ll hold back so that I won’t be in danger of losing the Divine Pillow.*

“Mai, Rokuko is one of my party members, so there would be absolutely no problem with us working together.”

“...If you insist, Keima, I will allow it. Just be sure to protect me, yes?”

And thus we somehow ended up going to the market with Rokuko.

* * *

The market was near the center of Tsia’s eastern district. Six days of the week it was an empty plaza, but today there were stands, carts, and all manner of mobile stores displaying their wares. They sold food like fruit, wheat, and dried fish on top of accessories, small gems, cutlery, baskets, weapons, armor, and so on. It was like a combination of a market and a flea market divided by two. At some points the merchants had their wares spread on rugs on the ground.

“Wow, lots of stuff here.”

“Seems inconvenient to me. We finish all our shopping in a single store back home.”

“Thing is, dude, you can buy everything at the market. Even stores that have lots of stuff like ours back home buy a lot of their stuff from here, y’know?” It was cheaper to buy things directly from the market, but the stores themselves survived by being located further away from it. The greengrocer and kebab stand, for instance, would just be one food seller of many here.

“If we intend to have the orphans get into trade, it seems wise to buy a stand and a license to sell in the market. We can order the raw materials from, hmmm...” Maïodore was observing the market carefully. *She sure is an earnest little girl. She was just talking about this being a date, too.* Incidentally, she was still holding Niku’s hand.

“Look, Keima! They’re selling some weird stuff over there. What is that?”

“My my, Rokuko, that is a kiwi fruit.” Rokuko pointed at a light brown thing, and Maïodore responded before I could. *Neat, this world has kiwis too.*

“Hmm... Is this really a fruit? I thought it was an animal since it’s so furry. Have you ever had one, Ichika?”

“Dude, who do you think I am? Duh. They’re sweet and hella tasty. Surprised to see them around here. Guess they ordered them from Pavella? They grow from trees, but once you take ’em off the tree they eventually grow legs and start running around. Some people think they’re an animal too cuz of that. But dude, doesn’t matter to me as long as I can eat ’em.” *Wait, what? The kiwis in this world run around?*

“Pretty sure that the girls are yellow on the inside and the guys are green. Girls are more sticky and boys are more chewy, basically. Takes some talent to figure out which is which from the outside, but I’m guessing the guy selling them knows.” Said guy piped in to say “Yep, and if I’m wrong you can have it for free!” *Mmm, they sure all look the same to me. They’re all just normal looking kiwis.*

“I’m kinda hungry, so. Anyone else want one?”

“In that case, why don’t we buy one of each gender and split them? We can share, Keima. Mister, one of each gender.” Maiodore paid for them the moment she finished speaking. The guy picked out two kiwis seemingly at random and cut them in half with a knife. Indeed, one was yellow on the inside and the other was green.

“Same for us, please.” Rokuko paid for some and the guy repeated the same steps, and once again, he was right. *What a pro. He’s kinda like the people who are paid to figure out which baby chickens are boys and which are girls.*

With that done, they both eagerly walked up to me.

“Now then, let us share, Keima.”

“Keima, you’re going to eat my kiwis, right?”

“...Uhhh, there’s an odd number of us, so things won’t add up if we all share. I’ll just get some for myself. Mister, one girl kiwi please.”

“What was the point, then?!”

“Figures. You’re good.” I played dumb, shocking Maiodore. Rokuko on the other had apparently predicted what I would do.

Niku gently patted Maiodore’s shoulders and split kiwis with her. *Yep, yep. Maiodore’s the only girl Niku knows that’s about the same age as her. I want them to be good friends.*

“Whoops, messed up. Have one for free.” *For real?* I was surprised for a second, but judging by his smile, he messed up on purpose. *Come on!*

“Keima, I can’t eat with both hands full. Hold one.” Rokuko pushed a kiwi slice onto me too. I took it.

“Okay, you eat that one. Ichika, you can have the other two.”

“Wait.”

“Duuude, really?! Heck yeah! Good idea!”

...It ended up with me exchanging kiwis with Rokuko, Maiodore exchanging kiwis with Niku, and Ichika getting two slices. Maiodore looked at me angrily, but I ignored her and took a bite of kiwi. *Oh man, this is good. Tastes just like*

the kiwis I ate in Japan.

We looked around at other stands and saw one that took up two spaces.

“Looks like he’s selling wheat.” The sacks of wheat were stacked higher than I was tall. This was where you could buy wheat in sack quantities.

“You a merchant, black hair? You gotta buy wheat from Tsia if you’ve got a cart. It sells like crazy all over the place.”

“That a fact?”

“Indeed, Keima. Tsia is the most prominent breadbasket in the Laverio Empire.”

The merchant noticed Maiodore and bowed his head without looking too surprised.

“Didn’t see you there, Lady Mai. Good to see you.”

“Hello again. How goes your business?”

“Can’t complain, can’t complain. You could say I’ve found a good line of trade with Pavella. Though over there vegetables and fruits sell better, since they get their wheat by boat.” Maiodore was having a business talk with the merchant. *Smart girl, huh?*

As an aside, this guy apparently had an actual store north of Tsia, and this was basically a form of marketing for him. Same price for his stuff here and there.

“The price of wheat is very important. Hmm... Same market price as always, perfect.” Maiodore was taking her trip through the market very seriously. *What a hard worker. I could never be like that.*

“Well. Looks like they’re selling the bags of flour for a bit more than in our store,” said Rokuko, comparing the price of Tsia flour to the flour sold in Goren.

“The stuff in our storage buildings has old wheat mixed in, which makes it cheaper. It’d be a waste to just throw wheat away when it gets old. We do sell stuff that’s unmixed, but it sells way worse.”

“Oh, I didn’t know.” The unmixed wheat was a bit more expensive than the wheat here. Considering the transportation fee, that was reasonable.

There was no reason for us to buy wheat, so we didn't get anything there. I would leave the town's wheat to the town's merchants. And speaking of the devil, we stumbled upon a merchant that came to our town often.

"Oh, hello, Keima. Out shopping?"

"Hm? Oh yeah, I've seen you around town." He was a member of Beddhism. As for his products, he was selling things made in Goren town. Cushions made by Beddhist nuns and portable massagers, for instance.

...The nuns paid a great deal of attention to how the massagers felt, carving them carefully and varnishing them to the point of being silky smooth before stroking and even licking all over them to ensure top quality texture. The result was a top-tier massager shaped like a kokeshi doll. *Sheesh, I told those succubus nuns to carve wooden dolls or something if they have so much free time, and they ended up making massagers. They're actually pretty good for reaching hard spots, though they're not electric.*



“Uhhh, do those actually sell?”

“Oh, the kokeshi massagers? They’re fairly popular among women, thanks to rumors that say using these massagers will make them more popular with men.” *That’s probably thanks to the succubus juices soaked into them.* “Though many men buy them as well, since they smell nice and are hand crafted by nuns. Overall, yes, they sell quite well.” *That’s probably thanks to the succubus juices soaked into them (again).*

“Beddhist holy water also sells fairly well, thanks to you.”

“That’s great, but remember, holy water doesn’t last very long.”

“Indeed, I remember. I will keep what doesn’t sell today for myself. Would you like some yourself, your holiness?”

“Nope, nope. I’ve got plenty at home.”

“I can imagine,” smiled the merchant.

“Hahahaha, you little. I’m expecting lots of donations,” I replied, sounding entirely like a corrupt priest as Maiodore peered at the massagers with great interest. I would rather she not, though. They were the shame of our town.

“These are products from your town, Keima?”

“Well now. Is this little girl your new girlfriend?” Although Mai visited the market often, there were undoubtedly still merchants that didn’t recognize her. This guy was one of them. But his phrasing was, uh, poor. I immediately corrected him.

“Don’t be rude. This is Maiodore, the Archduke’s daughter. I’m serving as her bodyguard right now.”

“Oh! E-Excuse me. Please accept my apologies.” The merchant bowed his head immediately. Naturally.

“My my, it is quite alright. Besides, you were not far off from the truth.” *Uh, yes he was.*

“...As an apology, please allow me to gift you some of my wares.”

“Oh, you don’t mind? Thank you very much.”

“No no, thank you for visiting,” he said as he handed Maiodore a kokeshi doll and holy water.

“Ahaha. What do you think, Rokuko?”

“Hmph. You’re pretty good, Mai. Get me some too, Keima!”

“...You could get loads of kokeshi dolls and holy water for free back at town. Why buy them here?”

“That’s not what I ... Ngggh!” Rokuko growled to herself. It looked like she had to swallow down something she wanted to say. *Are these two fighting through buying stuff or something?*

We walked on and next chanced upon a weapon stand. *Oh, but there’s shields too, and accessories. Not sure what to call it. A... A hardware stand?*

But in any case, it seemed that not many high quality weapons or shields were sold in the market. Mostly just apprentice work that couldn’t be displayed in the store. Apparently these kinds of cheap, easily lost or broken weapons were essential for the survival of upstart adventurers. Though you could also find the work of future famous blacksmiths, high quality used weapons, Magic Blades dug out of dungeons, and so on if you looked hard enough.

“Thing is, most dudes will bring those right to the smitheries themselves. Only people selling Magic Blades and stuff here are dudes who don’t wanna wait for their power to be identified or whatever.” Fakes were mixed in with the rest, too. *Hmm. Maybe these accessories are too?*

“Whoa whoa whoa, everything I have here is one hundred percent legitimate. No trying to pull the rug out from under me, please.”

“Whoops, my bad.” I narrowed my eyes at the products, which made the lady behind the stand get mad at me.

“Keima, this ring seems quite nice. Don’t you think it would look just wonderful on me?” said Maiodore while showing me a ring with a greenish blue gem resembling turquoise on it.

“Wow, that is a pretty gem. Is the metal part silver?”

“You got some good eyes! That’s a ring my little youngster made as practice.

The gem's a real one, carved by my hubby, a top class craftsman. I'll make it cheap for ya, whaddaya say?"

Maiodore glanced at me. *I mean, I'm just your bodyguard, I'm not gonna buy you stuff. Though it is true I kind of made you give your kiwi to Niku back there.*

"Hold up, Keima! What about this ring? Doesn't it look good on me?"

"You're already wearing the ring that suits you best."

"Oh, you're right. Eheheh." Rokuko puffed out her chest with victorious pride. Maiodore pouted unhappily. *Don't brag, Rokuko, it's childish. Oh. Right, she's a loli on the inside. Loli mode is her real form. Right.*

Niku was staring at a pendant while still holding Maiodore's hand.

"...Um, what's the name of this red gem, in the pendant?"

"Hm? Oh, that's... I dunno. But it looks pretty good, for sure. How 'bout one silver for it, black hair?" *Seriously, you don't even know what gem it is? Whatever. Niku wants it, so sure.*

"Alright, I'll take it."

"Wha, really? Alright then, I'll throw in that ring from earlier. Thank ye thank ye." *Well... Now I have the ring.* Maiodore was glancing furtively at me.

"Here, Kuro."

"Th-Thank you." I handed both the pendant and the ring to Niku. *Perfect, that solves everything.*

Incidentally, according to Ichika, jewelry was generally priced excessively high under the expectation that buyers would haggle down. Only men who wanted to show off to their girls would buy at the initial price. In short, the lady had thrown in the ring as a bonus since it looked to her like I was unknowingly buying it at an inflated price while trying to get a gift for my daughter, which wasn't far from the truth.

Also, Niku gave the ring to Maiodore, who was slumping over sadly. She loved it and her wings flapped happily. *I'm glad I raised a good kid.*

And so, with that done, we'd had our fill of the market and left.

It happened on our way home.

“Hold up, you five.” Someone called out to us as we walked down the main street. We could’ve just ignored him, but I turned around just in case and there I saw a fairly muscular guy. On his wrists were iron handcuffs with broken chains hanging off them. He was looking down at the ground, which made it hard to see his face. *Who is this guy?*

Niku’s ears twitched and she tensed up. *Well... Must be someone pretty strong.*

“Rokuko, get behind Ichika. You too, Mai.”

“R-Right.”

“Certainly.”

The two of them obeyed my orders and got behind Ichika and Niku respectively. *Wait, does that mean I’m on the frontlines here? W-Well. I have a Wearable Golem too, I’m not defenseless here. Be sure to help, Niku, okay? I mean, feel free to beat him all on your own, I don’t mind.*

“What do you want?”

“I’ve been... looking. For answers. It’s her,” he said, pointing at Maiodore.

...No way. He’s after the Divine Pillow too?!

“Don’t get in my way. I just have. Questions.”

“I’m afraid I’m gonna have to get in your way. I’m her bodyguard, y’see.” *Seriously though, I feel like I remember him somehow... Wait.* “You! You’re from the Last Commune!”

“Huh? Yeah, I am. I’m Hugo. The Last Commune’s number two.”

It all came back to me. He was the greatest foe I had faced there, the owner of immense mental fortitude who only broke after I patted his head while giving him my lap as a pillow. *Yuck. These are some memories I could have done without. Gives me goosebumps.*

“Why are you here? Didn’t you turn yourself in?”

“Yeah! That’s right, I did. Which makes me a good boy. I’m a good boy, but they locked me up. Does that seem right to you?” asked Hugo, his eyes unfocused. *Did this guy do some hard drugs or something?*

(“Ahhhh,”) interjected Kosaki, (“This guy’s mind is totally broken. You can really mess someone up if you push them too far, charmed or not.”)

(“Seriously? And you didn’t tell me?”) I responded, telepathically.

(“Well, no worries, you just gotta charm him again and it’ll be okie dokie. Go go go, let me possess you again!”)

(“Not in the middle of town! Can’t we do anything else?”)

(“Yeah, you can beat the crap out of him.”) *Alright... Guess that’s our only choice.*

“Ichika, guard those two! Ni, uh, Kuro! Hold him d—!”

“GAAAAAH!” I paused for a moment after mistaking Niku’s name. Hugo charged forward as if exploiting that blunder. He roared like a beast and went to tackle me...

...And just like that, picked me up before spinning around and running in the opposite direction.

“Huh?! Wha, wait, hold on!” Hugo was carrying me away in his arms. I could hear Rokuko and the others yelling from behind me.

“I’m not stopping. I’ve been looking so long, and it’s finally over.”

“It’s finally over? That sounds like you’ve found what you were looking for.”

“Yeah. I have. Don’t have to ask that dog-eared girl anymore.” *Dog-eared girl? Does that mean he was pointing at Niku a second ago, not Mai?* “What I was looking for, is now, in my arms.” Hugo’s voice was so warm I got goosebumps of terror, his arms holding me were so gentle I wanted to throw up, and his eyes looking at me were so filled with love I nearly passed out.

“I can tell. I noticed right away. You’re... my mama. My beloved mama!” That sealed it. There was no mistaking that this guy was after me. Or more precisely, after me in my succubus form. If one were to describe Hugo’s warm embrace in a single phrase, he was bridal carrying me.

Holy fuck. I felt more terror than I ever had in my entire life. I had to get away, somehow!

“L-Let go of me!”

“Struggling makes you hard to carry. Don’t struggle, Mama.” I flailed, fighting back against his muscular right arm pinning me to him, but my blows were weakened by my inability to kick off the ground to build up inertia. I wasn’t damaging him at all.

“You know, Mama, you hitting me... doesn’t feel bad. It feels good, actually. Hit me more,” he said with a gleaming white smile as he continued running with me in his arms. *Th-This guy... Did he just awaken to a masochist spirit?! Right here, right now?! He’s enjoying me, a guy, hitting him?! God, I can’t stop shaking! What the heck is happening? What can I do about this?*

“L-Let go!”

“Are you cold? Sorry, but deal with it for now. I’ll warm you up once we get home.” *Where is this guy going anyway?! N-Not to his inn room, right?! I* opened the menu to check. *Wait... We’re going east? Not to the slums?*

“Wh-Where are you taking me?”

“Outside the city, there’s a dungeon. Heard of it? That place is a paradise. My secret hideout’s there,” answered Hugo. *Okay, basically. There’s a dungeon to the east called the [Flower Garden of Light], this guy has a secret base there, and we’re heading there now.*

“How are you going to get past the gate?”

“Yeah, about that. Some nice person told me there’s a weak spot in the wall. Weak enough to blow a hole into it. Just gotta get there faster than a messenger, then blow open the hole.”

It wasn’t long before we reached a part of the wall right next to the east gate. At first glance it looked like a normal stone brick wall, but...

“Hmph!” One swift kick from Hugo and a hole crumbled open, big enough for people to walk through.

“Empty on the inside? That’s some lazy work here.”

“But that’s so that we can get outside safely. Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.” He ducked into the hole with me in his arms and just like that, we were out of Tsia.

“Could you let go of me already, by the way? Please?”

“No. You’re just gonna leave me behind again, aren’t you? Not happening.” He squeezed me tighter. *Guuuh, I’m starting to think I might never get away... Gah! I should have taught my Wearable Golem how to escape from bridal carries. Wait, who could have predicted this?! It’s not my fault! Come on... guuuh.*

* * *

In the end, Hugo didn’t stop. It was forbidden to enter the [Flower Garden of Light] when not on Guild business, but Hugo literally knocked away the guards and forced his way inside. The guards were probably fairly strong, but it looked like their hesitation at seeing me as a hostage gave Hugo the opening he needed. *Er, sorry. But my arms are kind of locked in here, so I would have liked for you to beat him up for me.* Not that I would know what to do if a massive muscular dude suddenly came running at me with a random guy in his arms.

“This is my secret base, Mama!” And so, we finally arrived. It was Hugo’s secret base. Though in reality, it was just a Safe Zone in the dungeon, not a building or anything like that.

“Yep, this place sucks. I’m leaving.”

“You’ll be in danger out there alone, y’know? You should just live here with me.”

“Also, I’m a guy! Don’t call me Mama!”

“Mama is Mama. I know that you’re actually nice on the inside, Mama.” *It’s no use, I’m not getting through to him.*

Actually, wait. We’re in a dungeon right now. This may be a Safe Zone, but there’s nobody around. That means I can transform into a Succubus and make him listen to anything I say!

(“Alright, Kosaki! Possess me!”)

("...I kiiinda wanna see what happens if I don't.")

("Quit joking around! Do your job!")

("Okaaay, but if you mess up, things will get really bad really fast.") *Really bad?* I blocked Kosaki's possession midway through.

("Ouch! C'mon, don't resist after telling me to possess you, that's like hitting my head.") *What head...? Anyway, more importantly,*

("What do you mean, really bad? Details please.")

("Um, I mean, we're talking about a buff dude and a weak little Succubus. The dude's head over heels for the Succubus, and they're both alone... How could something NOT happen, get what I'm saying?") *O-Oh man! That's terrifying! I can't even use my Wearable Golem when I'm possessed!*

("That's why I told you to let me possess you in the town. You coulda had Niku protect you if he went wild or something like that.")

("Come on! You should have told me that earlier! Details matter in decisions!") I went back to the planning stages. *For now, I should make him set me down.*

"Alright, alright. I'll compromise and say that I am indeed your mother."

"Compromise or not, Mama is Mama. Hahaha. Still, hearing you say that really makes me happy, yeah." I could directly feel his large chest muscles quivering with joy.

"Uuuh, so yeah, could you set me down? This is actually pretty uncomfortable."

"Mmm... You won't try running away?" *He's sure on guard... If he just sets me down, I can take out Siesta. Then I can put him to sleep and get out of here. Might take some sacrifice, but I'm running out of options here.*

"...I can't give you a lap pillow with you holding me like this, can I?"

"Oh! Good point, you're right. No reason not to put you down if it means getting a lap pillow." Hugo finally let me down, next to the wall. *Alright! Time to ge— Uh, hold up, too close. He's basically pressing me against the wall here.*

“Could you step back a bit?”

“Nuh-uh.”

“I’m not gonna fall right asleep or anything, so come on, please.”

“How ’bout this: I’ll step back if you give me a kiss,” said the older dude with a grin, his hard muscles bulging. *Hold up. I’m an adult. Come back to your senses already! You weren’t like this back when you were the Last Commune’s number two! You’ve changed!*

(“And that is absolutely your fault, Master.”)

(“But! Buuut!”) Regardless, I had to get him away from me. *I mean, if it’s just a kiss...? No, no way. Never. Jesus, I want to cry.*

The second I thought that, the floor suddenly vanished from beneath me. I felt a floating sensation, and Hugo exploited the opportunity to rush forward and cling to me. *Oh yeah, this is a dungeon. Safe Zones aren’t safe at all! Ahahaha!*

We hit the ground with a surprisingly heavy thunk.

“...Are you okay, Mama? Are you... hurt?”

“N-Nah, I’m fine.” Hearing that, Hugo smiled.

“Thank, goodness...” He fell unconscious with a smile. It seemed that he had cushioned my fall, leaving me mostly unhurt. Which meant he had clung to me to protect me. *Sorry for thinking you were just exploiting the opportunity.*

Hugo falling unconscious weakened his grip enough for me to wiggle out of his arms. I looked around and saw that I was in a bright, small room filled with green. The door leading into a hallway was blocked with rows of iron pillars coming out of the ground and reaching to the ceiling. In other words, I was in a jail cell.

I started looking around for an exit when suddenly I heard some kind of music. It was an upbeat, flashy kind of song you might hear at the start of a movie. A man appeared with the music playing in the background. He was wearing a flashy white outfit embroidered with golden thread. His blonde hair was cut in a masculine fashion, but he had a delicately crafted face like a

woman's. He was always wearing thick make-up that made his expression more clear.

The man... Wait, no. There were rounded curves at her chest. This was merely a beautiful woman dressing as a man.

She walked to the rhythm of the song, practically dancing with each step as flowers bloomed where her feet touched the ground. The rails bent away and allowed her to step in front of me. She then lifted her arms up in a Y shape as the music reached a dramatic climax. "Why hello there! I've been waiting for you!" She had a clear, husky voice.

"...Who are you?" Her outfit, tone, the whole package made her feel like the lead actor in a theatrical play. Was she a Hero?

"Well well, Keima. I know you, but you do not know me. Aaah, how unfair! Allow me to introduce myself then!" The beautiful cross-dressing woman posed dramatically as she spoke. "I'll put it simply, so you can understand! I am the... Core of the Tsia Dungeon!" She struck a triumphant pose as the flowers at her feet grew around her, looking like the background to a romantic manga page as fanfare played from somewhere. *What kind of joke is this? Why is she acting out a play in front of me?*

"By the way, my number is 219. I am much your senior, so be a dear and show me respect, mmm?" *If we're talking about seniors, Ittetsu's 112 is a higher number than yours, so.*

I shook off my confusion and tried asking some questions.

"Uhhh. You said you know who I am, right? How's that?"

"Is it truly so hard to guess? You are the [Cave of Greed's] Dungeon Master. I've heard all about you from *her*. Don't touch him, she said." *Yeah, that "her" is definitely Haku.*

"Then let me out of here."

"I would love to say yes, Keima, but no. I have my own circumstances, you see." Vines stretched out and attacked me. It was sudden, but I managed to dodge them thanks to my Wearable Golem. If only we weren't in a small jail cell. The vines chased after me and caught me in no time.

“...Hm. Would you turn back into that beautiful form for me? You’re much more charming that way.”

“Wha?! How do you know about that?” I asked to be sure, but I honestly already knew the answer.

“Is it not obvious? Surely you remember what this dungeon is called.”

Indeed, the Tsia Dungeon. A dungeon with a close connection to Tsia.

“Tsia is under my control!” she said, holding up a hand dramatically and flashing her white teeth in a smile as she spoke. *Figures. She’s been watching what I did in Tsia.*

Just like I could monitor Goren through dungeon functions, she could monitor Tsia. And since she’s a Core, she didn’t need to take breaks or sleep. She could watch anyone or anything she wanted twenty-four seven.

“That man by your feet was ever so helpful. I put the silly humans following you to sleep and broke the cell and city walls for him, but it was up to him to bring you here for me.”

“...So you’re behind him kidnapping me, huh?”

“Charms are very dangerous. A charmed individual can have their mind and goals warped with the simplest of pushes. I just had to give him a sweet sniff of a little pollen.” She hadn’t just influenced Hugo’s surroundings, she had apparently done something directly to him. Maybe she had doped him up with the pollen or whatever while telling him about the weakened walls.

“But still. Charms. They’re delightfully powerful. The way you wrapped those criminals in the slums around your fingers was as splendid as it was comical. I would not have had it in me to touch those disgusting men as you did, to be honest,” said Core 219 before clapping. *She saw that much? It should be safe to assume that she’s been watching me constantly since I entered Tsia.*

“Oh, and of course, charms won’t work against me. They are the power of Succubi. It helps that there exists no one more beautiful than I, but even besides that, I have charm resistance. Of course.” *Yeah... She can use DP, skills shouldn’t be too hard for her to learn.*

“But in any case. You are a human, no doubt about it. Why can you, as a human, use the power of Succubi?”

“Well, I’m a Dungeon Master. Consider that a business secret.”

“Spicy, spicy. That’s more than fine with me, you can tell me later if the mood strikes. I thought that we might be birds of the same feather, but I see now that is not the case.” *Uhhh, yeah, I’m not into cross-dressing. I didn’t do all that because I wanted to.*

“So. What do you intend to do with me?”

“You are a hostage. Now now, don’t fret. I will of course feed you. No point in a dead hostage, after all. Much human food is gathered from my dungeon, the [Flower Garden of Light]. I’m not sure how it tastes, but you won’t starve.”

“...You’ve never eaten any yourself?”

“I do not eat. What comes in must go out, no? Spare me the thought of such ugliness.” *In other words, pretty girls don’t p**p. Fair enough.* “I need only water and sunlight to sustain myself, though nice ground is always welcome. You humans need food to survive, no? Can’t say I envy your inconvenient bodies.” *She must be a plant-type Core. Flowers and vines grow from her footprints, and the Tsia Dungeon’s plant-based with bug monsters if I remember correctly, so this should be a safe assumption.*

“In short, fear not. You need only sit still until I accomplish my objective. I’ll have no reason not to release you once all this is over.”

“What is your objective, anyway? Why kidnap me?” I asked, which led to Core 219 smiling as if she had been waiting for me to ask just that question.

“Revolution! I will wave the flags of rebellion against *her*. Yes indeed, up until now I have endured the humiliation of kneeling before her. To be fair, yes, to be fair, she is quite beautiful herself, the picture of voluptuous grandeur. But still, these harsh days of humiliation will one day be but a spicy memory in my tale of ascension! The finale will be mine!” *Alright. Basically, she’s going to use me as a hostage to fight against Haku.*

“...Wait. Hold a second. Why use me as a hostage?”

“Come now, there could only be one reason. Core 695 adores you, and *she* adores Core 695. In short, if I take you as a hostage, *she* will be unable to lay her hands on me directly! What a splendid idea!” said Core 219, striking a pose again. *Uh... Your plan’s awful! You’re just killing yourself with extra steps!*

“Look, I’m gonna be real with you. Give up now while you’re ahead. No way you can beat Haku.”

“I can and will beat her. I have much DP stored from years of Tsia’s development, and you as a hostage.” *Haku obviously has a ton of DP stored up too! And me being a hostage won’t stop her from doing anything!* “Hahahaha! Fear not, my beauty could never lose!”

“That’s not proof! Rethink your whole life!”

“Hahahahahaha! Aaaahahahaha!” Core 219 ignored my yells and left while laughing brightly, flowers blooming in her footsteps. I was still locked up, though.

...Wait, hold on. Couldn’t she at least move this dude to another jail cell?! My chastity’s in danger!

Chapter 3 — Rokuko's Perspective

"...Bwuh?" Keima was kidnapped. It all happened in seconds.

".....Bwuh?" Who was saying bwuh? Maybe me, maybe everyone. All I knew was that all of us were so shocked that we couldn't even react. Not me, not Niku, and not the blue-haired winged girl named Maiodore.

"H-Hold on just a moment. Was he not after me...?"

"...I don't know either. Ichika, Niku, do either of you understand what just happened?"

"I-I dunno why, but that muscular old dude just kidnapped Master, dude." *He was pretty muscular.*

"Um, that was, a Last Commune, administrator..."

"Really, Niku? Well, he did say that himself, I think." *But why would he kidnap Keima? I need to think this through. Mmmm, Last Commune. The organization Keima destroyed... Oh, wait. Are charms at fault? It's possible. In which case, this isn't something we should talk about in front of Maiodore.*

"Well, no matter what was up with that guy, we shouldn't just be standing around. Ichika, go report to the authorities that there's been a kidnapping. Don't forget to mention what direction he went in."

"Got it! Be back in a sec!" Ichika immediately ran off to follow my orders. *Mmm... Ichika and Niku can't use the menu. I'll go find her later.* Which reminded me of the map. I opened up the map from the menu and checked for Keima's location. The dot representing Keima and the dot representing the human who kidnapped him were both moving at an incredibly fast speed. But for some reason, the human's dot was green, like an ally's.

I was outside of my dungeon territory, so enemies and neutral entities would only show up on the map if within view of an ally. But I could see allies from a reasonably far distance away. Even now I could see the exact locations of Rei and the others in Goren, not to mention the goblins in our dungeon.

I thought that the kidnapper would be shown since Keima must be able to see him, but... Feeling confused, I went to tag the dots so as to keep track of them, at which point I remembered I could check the specific status of my allies. I checked the man's dot and saw "Status: Charmed (Deeply)".

...Is Keima's Succubus charm really that intense? I subconsciously gulped. But anyway, if the man was still charmed, he probably wouldn't be killing Keima for revenge. That was relieving, at least.

By the way, Keima's status was "Confused." I would be confused in his situation too.

"What do you want to do, Niku? You were guarding Maiodore, right?"

"...Yes."

"Like, I'm pretty sure Keima won't die, but... I'm worried. In a lot of ways." We were talking about Keima here. If he wasn't in life-threatening danger, he would definitely find a way out on his own. Kosaki wasn't displayed on the map since she was treated as equipment, but with her on his finger he could use his charms again if necessary. Not to mention {Ultra Transformation}, his golems, and so on. He would be fine on his own, definitely. *I-I mean, right? He's Keima.*

"You should keep guarding her for now Niku."

"B-But... Sh-Shouldn't I chase after Master...?" *Like, I want to do that myself. But I can see them on the map and they're going east super fast. Super, super fast. I can't catch them. Niku might be able to, but...*

"...Niku. You and Keima were in the middle of a bodyguard quest, right? Quests are jobs. Jobs are promises. You have to keep your promises. Do you want to make Keima break a promise? If not, finish the job you promised to do."

"O-Okay." Niku nodded. *Mhm, she knows when she needs to listen.*

Oh, right, Maiodore is here. And she's still stunned. I wonder if she's okay?

"Hellooooo?" I tapped her head, which finally snapped her back into reality. "Okay, Mai. Why don't we take you home now? You're the Archduke's daughter, your home must be well guarded. It's possible that your mansion

could be attacked, but you'd be safer there than anywhere else."

"Ah, y-yes. You're right, and I need to report this to father..." *Oh, she's back in action.*

"I'll go too. He needs someone there that can give a proper report. Mai, you let this throw you way too off."

"...S-Sorry, Rokuko."

It's kind of like I managed to be so calm since they were so thrown off. I would have panicked more if I couldn't check up on him through the map, I think. Anyway, I'll think more about this on the way to her mansion.

Archduke Bonodore's Perspective

As I was busily working my way through the enormous amount of paperwork still left over from the Last Commune incident, a butler entered my room.

"Lord Bonodre, Lady Mai has just returned. She wishes to see you."

"Hm? That was faster than even yesterday. Something must have happened." I told him to let her in. He left and Mai took his place in no time.

"Excuse me, Father. Something terrible has happened."

"Welcome back, Mai. I see Kuro is with you... and a pretty girl I'm not familiar with. Who is she? And where is Keima?" There was a young girl beside Mai with long, flowing blonde hair and fierce eyes that went well with her calm smile. She was probably fifteen, a new adult.

"Hello. I am Keima's partner, Rokuko."

Rokuko. That was a name familiar to me. She was one of Keima's party members... and one who, if treated lightly, would lead to my death. I swallowed hard.

"...Might I ask for your family name as well?"

"Oh, do I really have to say both? Noble greetings sure are annoying. It's Labyrinthart." She said her family name without blinking, which was more than you could say for my reaction.

In truth, long before I had consulted the capital for information on Keima, I had, frightfully enough, received a letter from the Ivory Goddess herself. In it was a message coded in noble euphemisms, but not to such an extent that the message was anything but perfectly clear: There is a girl named Rokuko Labyrinthart in Goren, and if she is harmed in any way whatsoever, you will pay with your life.

“...Rokuko, erm, this might come off as a rude question, but... Might I ask what exactly your relationship with Keima is?” She had said she was his partner, which implied she was more than just a party member. Hence my question.

“Hm? Well... You could say we’re close enough for him to give me a ring and a holy symbol.” Rokuko held up a white hand to show the red ring on it while taking out the red holy symbol she had been hiding behind the chest of her shirt.

As far as I knew, High Priestess Rei held the ruby holy symbol of Beddhism. Was that a replica? No, it had been given to her by Keima, the pope. Both ruby symbols were real. In other words, Rokuko was being treated on the same level as the High Priestess Rei. Not to mention that it was made with a ruby that impressively sized. It would be worth quite a sizable sum of money.

...As for the ring, the ruby was embedded in metal of some kind. What method of smithing would allow one to make a ring such as that? The metal itself couldn’t be ignored either. Judging by the luster and color, it was undoubtedly orichalcum. In short, the ring itself was worth a lot of money too. Or really, that was selling it short. It was so valuable money itself lost meaning before it. It was priceless in the true sense of the word.

“I see...” In any case, I understood that Keima cared very deeply for Rokuko. Their relationship likely contained depths deeper than I would ever know. Historically, men would give women jewelry as a sign of their love. Rokuko didn’t seem to be Kuroinu’s mother, so... Perhaps she was his second wife? His mistress...? No, she might have been his first wife.

“...If you don’t mind, er, I would like to ask what your relationship with Kuroinu might be.”

“My relationship with her? Well, I guess she’s Keima’s property. And mine,

too. Right?”

“Yes, Rokuko.” Rokuko clearly and unflinchingly called *Niku* her *property*. Kuroinu agreed to that calmly, seemingly undisturbed. Even Mai was surprised by that.

“...Er, about Kuroinu’s first name.”

“Mmm? What about it?”

“...Er, you may know this already, but it means...” I hesitated for a bit before continuing, during which time Rokuko smiled.

“I know what niku means, of course. A niku is a sex slave, right?” So she was using the name knowing what it meant. It grew even harder to understand their relationship. Her tone made it clear she wasn’t trying to scorn or belittle Kuroinu. In fact, there was clear trust in their relationship, a firm belief in each other that could be detected at a glance. No doubt this was yet another facet of Keima’s complex family circumstances with Kuroinu.

“Forgive me, but I have just one more question. Do you know the Ivory Goddess?”

“.....”

I would have preferred that she didn’t suddenly fall silent in thought. I shouldn’t have asked, this was bad for my heart. I could practically feel my hair falling out.

“Rokuko.”

“Hm? What is it, Niku?”

Kuroinu whispered into Rokuko’s ears.

“.....Oooh, right! Right! She’s the most important regular we have at the inn.”

“I-I see. That is certainly something.”

“Mhm, I’m glad I remembered.” I shouldn’t have asked. I really shouldn’t have asked! There wasn’t a human alive in the Laverio Empire so great in status that they could forget about the Ivory Goddess entirely! Her pause had merely been

her pretending not to remember the goddess. By having Kuroinu whisper a “reminder” into her ear, she was subtly telling me that both she and Kuroinu were closely connected to the Ivory Goddess.

Even if that wasn’t an act they had planned beforehand, that would just mean she had forgotten her prepared answer, or in other words, at the very least, her relationship with the Ivory Goddess was so significant that she had to plan ahead to disguise it! *Right. I will pretend I heard nothing. When it comes to the words of nobles, even lies can become truth when accepted by all. I will believe that Haku merely is just a regular at her inn and leave it at that.*

...That would still mean that the Ivory Goddess owned an inn for unknown private reasons, but still, that was the best outcome for my heart.

“Erm, in any case, why did you return so quickly?” I shifted the subject and directed my attention to Mai.

“Oh, yes! That’s what I’m here to report, Father! Keima’s been kidnapped!” she said, making me blink in confusion.

“...Keima, kidnapped? What do you mean?”

“Exactly what she said, Bonodore. My partner, Keima, just got kidnapped by the former number two of the Last Commune.” Rokuko butted in and addressed me in quite a frank manner, but I couldn’t demand she be more polite. After all, for Keima the Ivory Goddess guaranteed his skill, but for Rokuko she guaranteed she’d kill me if anything happened to her. With the Ivory Goddess giving her that much of a backing, there was no doubt I should treat Rokuko like a superior despite my position as Archduke. It was clear that if it came down to picking between Rokuko and I, the goddess would always pick Rokuko.

“Last Commune’s number two... I believe he was sent to prison. Did he escape? Either way, I find it hard to believe that Keima of all people was kidnapped.”

“I wouldn’t believe it either if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes. I do have one of my party members reporting this to the military police, so they can investigate it as a kidnapping.” said Rokuko, shrugging. Mai and Kuroinu nodded in agreement.

“By the way, do you know what’s to the east of here? That’s the direction he was running in.”

“The east... Do you mean inside the city, or outside the city?” I asked. Rokuko briefly glanced away.

“Outside.” She had probably thought about it and predicted that the kidnapper had fled the city. I personally thought that the guards would stop him at the gate if he tried to leave, but Rokuko seemed certain somehow. The Last Commune was finished, but perhaps she knew of some trump card they still had.

“Outside of the city, there are many farms and a dungeon known as the [Flower Garden of Light]. Perhaps he’s hiding out within one of the barns.”

“And beyond that?”

“...The Holy Kingdom?”

“Aaah, no, they won’t go that far. He must be aiming for that [Flower Garden of Light] then.” It was true that one could gather food from within that dungeon, and it would be difficult to send soldiers in after them. Of all places, it wouldn’t be unlikely for a fleeing criminal to hide there.

“The Adventurer’s Guild and I have assigned several soldiers there to guard its entrance, you know.”

“They probably won’t be able to stop him. Well, either way, they’ll be able to report whether or not they saw a kidnapper.” For a second I wondered why she was so confident they would lose, but then I remembered we were talking about a man who had kidnapped Keima. It was safe to assume that the guards, used to spending days doing nothing at what basically amounted to a do-nothing post, would be caught off guard and beaten back.

“Now then, what exactly are you suggesting I should do about this?”

“U-Um, Father. We must send soldiers to rescue—”

“Mai. Keima was with you as your bodyguard. In short, he understood that anything that happened while guarding you would be his own responsibility. You’re safe, which means he succeeded in his duty. But I cannot as archduke

send out soldiers to rescue a mere adventurer.”

“Does that mean... you’re going to abandon Keima?!” Mai looked close to tears, but I was of course just putting up a front. Keima was the chief of a rapidly growing town and the pope of Beddhism, a religion I supported myself. There was no chance that I would abandon him. “That said, I—”

“You’ll look bad if you let a criminal just escape and stay loose out there?” Rokuko said what I was going to before I could finish.

It wasn’t the strongest excuse, but it was true that we would look bad. This was a mess nobody would blame me for working to clean.

“You took the words right out of my mouth. Which means yes, I’ll be dispatching soldiers to the dungeon. If he did flee to the dungeon I’ll be receiving a report of that soon, and I’ll need to get revenge for the fallen. It’s only natural that I should chase after an escaped criminal,” I declared, leading to Mai regaining her smile. Rokuko nodded as if anything else would have been out of the question.

“...I suppose I should form a platoon of soldiers to send to the dungeon.”

“That will probably be our best option since, given the circumstances, we don’t really want to hire adventurers. But they’ll probably only be good for guarding the entrance of the dungeon, all things considered.”

“Then I will arrange for just that.”

Our conversation was interrupted by a knock on the door. It was an urgent report, likely about the escaped prisoner. I took the opportunity to order the platoon of soldiers to be established and dispatched.

I glanced at Mai and saw that she looked confused.

“...R-Rokuko, just who are you?” Rokuko was talking on equal terms to me, the archduke, and doing so with an air of unflinching confidence. Not only that, but she was — based on her appearance, at least — a young girl who had just reached adulthood. I wanted to know who she was, but I sensed that it would be better to remain forever ignorant.

“I’m Keima’s partner,” she said with a smile.

...Even if I did manage to get Keima and Mai married, I was scared of what Rokuko would do afterwards. It seemed that, as expected, I would need to find an escape route that didn't involve Keima and Mai marrying.

"Just you wait, Keima, I'll come save you soon...! Oh, but you'll probably break free on your own before I get to you." To be honest, I agreed with Rokuko. It was possible.

Keima's Perspective

Let's summarize the situation.

I was kidnapped and brought to the [Flower Garden of Light] by Hugo, the second in command of the criminal organization I destroyed. That was the first step in the devious master plan of the [Flower Garden of Light's] Dungeon Core, Core 219. She had Tsia under her control and observed my movements closely until she could manipulate Hugo into kidnapping me.

Long story short, I ended up locked in a jail cell with Hugo. I was tied up with vines, but Hugo was just unconscious. Let me clarify the situation a bit further. Hugo, my kidnapper, was on a rampage due to Core 219 messing with the charm controlling him. He was so far gone that he was even looking at me, a fellow man, with lustful eyes. Imagine the fear of an extremely muscular, forty-year-old dude staring at you with passionate bedroom eyes. Personally, my back shuddered and my butt clenched defensively.

...I-I gotta get out of here, I thought from the absolute bottom of my heart. Nothing good is gonna come from me being here.

("So, Master, what's the plan? Not even transforming into a Succubus will break these vines, probably.") So said Kosaki, but there were plenty of ways I could break out of the vines if I wanted to.

Putting aside the Succubus transformation in its entirety, I had {Create Golem}, {Summon Gargoyle}, and {Ultra Transformation} at my disposal. Core 219 had probably only seen my {Ultra Transformation} out of all of those. For long-term reasons I could only make Clay Golems with {Create Golem}. I could {Summon Gargoyle} as much as I wanted since Haku already knew I had it, but I

wanted to keep it as a potential trump card against Core 219. Which meant that I should use {Ultra Transformation}, a skill both Haku and Core 219 knew I had.

The problem was what I should do after that... *Oh, wait. Can I use the map function still?* I opened the menu and brought up the map. On it was the path through the dungeon I had been carried through and the room with the pitfall. *Alright, worst case scenario, I can use this to find my way back out. Might be rough if she's put new traps up there, but I should make it out with some good golem usage.*

I was currently at the sixth underground floor. The Safe Zone was one floor above me, at floor five. Step one was looking for the staircase up out of here.

...Wait. I just noticed, but the map's saying Hugo is my ally. It's not bugging out, is it? Also, what's with this "Muscle Dude" tag? Did Rokuko add that? Don't tell me Rokuko's the one who sent Hugo. My thoughts were interrupted by "Muscle Dude" Hugo groaning awake.

"N-Ngggh..." *Oh crap. He's already waking up.* I decided to play it safe and get out of the jail cell as soon as possible.

I used {Ultra Transformation} to transform into a mouse. My small mouse body easily slipped out of the vines and passed through the iron bars. Then I canceled the transformation. *Alright, escape successful... Wait, I forgot about clothes! My clothes! Gaaah, stupid {Ultra Transformation}! Why don't you keep track of clothes?! Learn from the Succubus transformation!*

"Ngh, my head... Where in the world am I...? Mama...?" Hugo was waking up. I was naked. Suffice to say. Shit's bad.

("Master, now's the perfect time to go Succubus! You'll be safe no matter what thanks to the bars, and it'll give you clothes too!")

("Good thinking! Alright, possess me!") I allowed Kosaki to possess me and thus transformed into a Succubus. *Whew... Femboy Succubi may wear pretty revealing clothing, but this is still a lot better than nothing. It's especially good that all my most important parts are hidden.*

Also, I struck a pose for some reason. Core 219 might have left an impact on me.

“You’re so cute, Master! I need to record this. Master, please grant me menu privileges.”)

“Not a chance. I’m gonna use my Absolute Authority to order you to never record me in this form.”)

“So cruel! In that case, I’m gonna enjoy the hell out of this body and feel good all over.”) I wish she wouldn’t do that, but wearing clothes was more important than spiting her.

Hugo noticed me. As soon as he saw me, he charged at the bars in a desperate leap.

“Ah! M-Mama! You’re safe, and, back to normal...!”

“Y-Yeah. Why don’t you take a seat for now?” Hugo was smilingly more brightly than I had ever seen a man smile in my life. *Calm down, please.*

“Okay, Mama!” Hugo obediently obeyed me and sat down. He was watching me through the bars.

“...Uhhhh.”

“Mmm? What’s wrong, Mama?” He was kind of acting like a kid. Maybe his mind had actually regressed to childhood?

“Uhhhh, well, could you give me the clothes and sword on the ground over there?”

“These...? Mama’s clothes...”

“Don’t smell them! Alright, hand them over. Good boy, good boy. I’m so, so proud of you.” I complimented Hugo after he obediently handed over my clothes, which put a big smile on his face. The buff, harsh looking old dude was looking like an innocent child.

“Hey, Kosaki. Is he age regressing or something? Like, is this the effect being charmed is having on him?”)

“Probably, and it looks like he’s not rampaging right now.”) His rampage was probably the result of Core 219’s meddling. Being knocked unconscious for a bit might have calmed him down... until he saw me like this again, that is. Well, whatever.

“Mama, why are you out there?” asked Hugo, tilting his thick neck in confusion.

“‘Cause I broke out,” I replied, leading Hugo to look around.

“Wha? This is a jail cell? They’re getting in the way of me meeting Mama again...” Hugo looked down and started murmuring stuff I couldn’t quite hear. *Uh, freak much??* I took a step back and Hugo grabbed the bars tightly.

(“H-Hey, Kosaki. Isn’t he acting a little weird right now? Didn’t you say he wasn’t rampaging?”)

(“Ahhhh, sorry. Looks like something flipped his switch.”) *Uh, the metal bars are literally creaking right now. Is that okay? It’s not okay, is it?!*

“Nngraaaaah! Haaah, haaah...”

“Gah?!” Hugo broke the bars in half and burst out of the jail cell. Steam was rising off his bulging muscles and his eyes were bloodshot.

I had learned a valuable lesson today. The dungeon [Jail] was sturdy, but not impossible to destroy. *But now’s not the time to be casually dissecting this!*

“J-Just calm down! I-I’m right here! Mama’s right here!”

“Hrrrrgh, hrrrrgh... Ma...ma...?”

“That’s right, Mama’s here. So be a good boy. Stay, stay.” I consoled Hugo while talking to Kosaki telepathically.

(“Hey, Kosaki, should I end the Succubus transformation?”)

(“If you wanna be naked, sure. That’s totally fine with me.”) *That’s obviously not fine with me?! I never should have ever messed with this Succubus transformation stuff.* Hit by regret that came far too late to mean anything, I tried gently talking to the muscle dude.

“Okay. Don’t move.”

“Ngggh... Ma...ma... Mama... pat, pat... my heaaad...” Hugo was steadily calming down. I assented and nervously patted his head. *Theeere there. I’m not scared, I’m not scared...* I felt like I was consoling an angry lion.

After patting his head, Hugo came back to his senses. Arguably.

“...Mama! Wha? I thought I was in the jail cell.”

“Uhhhh... Well. You got out.”

“Did you let me out? Thanks, Mama!” he said before trying to cling happily to me. *Gaaah! Don't rub your head against my stomach! Don't smell me! Don't push your face against my stomach!*

“Could you step like three steps away from me? Like a good boy would.”

“Mhm, okay.” Surprisingly enough, Hugo listened to my request and let go. *Huh? That's weird. I thought he'd be more persistent.*

(“It's probably like, you know, 'cause you're back to looking and sounding like his 'Mama.' You in your normal form without the Succubus buff just looked like his Mama, you weren't actually his Mama.”)

(“...That sounds like made up nonsense, but I'll believe it.”) To put it in fantasy terms, a hero would be a lot more motivated to go kill the demon king if ordered to by a charismatic king than some lazy looking guy lazing on a couch. Same deal here.

(“So basically, he'll listen to what I say when I'm in Succubus form.”)

(“Yup. I'm gonna suggest you stay transformed for a bit. Especially since we just learned we can stop his rampaging like this.”)

(“...Yeah, seems fair. I'm glad this all worked out.”) Especially since my chastity would have been in danger otherwise.

By the way, unlike {Ultra Transformation}, being a Succubus didn't lower my stats or anything. At worst it made my Wearable Golem disappear, but that was it. The silver lining was that the buff dude in front of me would be absolutely more useful in battle than a Wearable Golem. It wasn't ideal, but I would need to act like a princess and escape with his help.

* * *

“Listen up. Always walk in front of me. Don't even think about getting behind me.”

“Okay, Mama! I just need to stay where you can see me!”

Hugo and I advanced through the dungeon with him in front and me in back. The vine-covered walls of the corridors were probably made of stone or packed dirt, but the vines were so thick I couldn't even see them. It would be impossible to predict where Core 219 might launch a surprise attack.

Naturally, she would have noticed our escape the moment it happened. It was safe to assume she would be sending monsters after us. And just as expected, a child-sized walking flower appeared out of the shadows in the corridor. The flower petals were speckled like tiger lilies, its roots were its feet, and its leaves were its hands.

("Just gonna toss out there that charms don't work on plant-type monsters.")

("...Yeah, figures. They're plants.") Individual plants had their own stamen and pistil, after all, and they left their pollen to bugs and the wind. *Though to be fair, these guys are using their roots and vines as feet and tentacles, so they have more options.*

"Leave him to me, Mama!" Hugo knocked aside the blade-like leaves, stomped on the tentacle vines wrapping around his feet, and ultimately killed the monster by ripping out its flower petals with his bare hands. *Yeah... This guy's as strong as he looks.*

"This is a Dance Flower. Their honey is really sweet, Mama." Hugo started sucking on the base of a flower petal. *Oh yeah, I remember sucking honey out of plants when I was in elementary school. Nostalgic.*

"Here, Mama, have some." Hugo tried handing me the flower petal he had just been sucking on. *Uh, no thanks. I don't want to put my mouth on something an older dude's been sucking on.* I thought about how to turn him down, then let it out.

"I don't want it. You can have the rest."

"Yaaay, thanks Mama!" He started sucking the honey down again with a full smile.

"Your honey tastes so good, Mama!" *Don't say it like that... At least say "the Dance Flower honey you gave me."*

We continued exploring. Soon, we came to a dead end with a vine-covered

treasure chest. The [Flower Garden of Light] was a dungeon, and thus naturally had treasure hidden about. *I mean, we don't really need any treasure since we're just trying to escape, but maybe it has food? Though that wouldn't matter, since my {Storage} has days worth of food, and worst case scenario I can buy more with my portable DP.*

I ultimately decided to avoid the chest and the unnecessary danger it represented, but... Hugo rushed right toward it, like a kid that just found a super cool armored beetle. *Dude, you're like forty. Try and contain yourself.*

"Mama, a treasure chest! Let's open it!"

"Stop! That's probably a tra—" Hugo threw open the chest and immediately several wooden spears shot toward him. For a second I thought he was done for, but then.

"Hmph!" Snapped spears fell to the ground, as if they had slammed against metal and broken apart. "Look, Mama, a mana potion! Here, you can have it."

"Uh? Uhhhh...? Th-The, spears?"

"Hm? What's wrong, Mama?" They were wooden spears, sure, but Hugo being able to block them with just a "hmph!" was weird. That kind of defensive power wasn't normal. Was he made of iron or something? *Oh jeez, he's even stronger than I thought.*

"Eeer, are you okay?"

"Yup, totally! Well, um... The spears kind of hurt. Rub my head?" said Hugo, thrusting his unharmed head toward me. Aside from the old battle scars, there wasn't a scratch on him. That wasn't normal. *Well... I'll comply here, as thanks for the mana potion. That might help him stay calm? I hope it will. Cause I mean, I really don't wanna make this guy mad! What's wrong with getting some brownie points here?!*

Next appeared another flower... no, a bug. It was a pink orchid mantis, bigger than a human.

...I read a comic about something like this before. What if bugs were as big as humans. Well, time to find out. The bug seemed like a deadly foe and I swallowed hard at the sight of him. It lifted up its body high to be intimidating,

raising its scythe-like arms up to the ceiling before swinging them down. But Hugo nonetheless stepped forward.

“Stay back, Mama... hrrrgh!”

“Sckreeeeeeee?!” Hugo took the swings on his left arm, then ripped the bug’s scythes right off. *Wait... holy crap, Hugo’s own arm is like a quarter cut off! Is that bone I see?!*

“U-Uh. Is your arm okay?!”

“Ahaha, it hurts, but I’m fine, Mamma! I’m so happy I got to protect you!”
Alright, he’s still completely out of his mind.

Hugo snapped the bug’s neck, killing it. He then snapped its spine to be safe and ripped off all its limbs.

“Bugs can move without a head, so you gotta be real thorough,” he said with blood gushing out of his left arm and mixing with the bug’s blue guts to form a purple pool on the ground.

“Uh, there’s a lot of blood coming out of your arm. You really okay?” Hugo responded to my question with a monstrous smile.

“Thanks for worrying about me! It’ll be better if you put some spit on it...” said Hugo, glancing my way. *Wait, is he telling me to lick it? That gaping wound? Uh, did he let himself get cut so this would happen?*

“...O Light, soothe the wounded sheep before you — {Healing}.” Naturally I wasn’t about to do that, so I just cast Restoration Magic.

“Wow, Mama, it’s all fixed up! I can keep fighting now!”

“Y-Yep. That’s Restoration Magic for you. Don’t push yourself too hard though, alright?”

“...Okay, Mama!” *Yeah, he’s gonna do that again next time. I’m getting worried now. Though I mean, honestly, I wouldn’t really mind if this guy died. That would actually be better for the sake of my chastity.*

“By the way, Hugo. Do you have any means of healing yourself? No hiding anything, say it all.”

“It would take some time, but I could heal that wound I just got by casting {Healing Meditation} for about ten minutes,” answered Hugo honestly. *Ten whole minutes...? That’s way too slow for a jail break. And more monsters would probably come before those ten minutes were up anyway. Seems like we’re gonna have to rely on my {Healing}.*

As we progressed we were attacked by War Cacti, and even monsters known as Claymores that shot out seeds which exploded like grenades. But Hugo faced them all and after protecting me, turned around with a smile.

“You okay, Mama?”

“...Thanks to you. Uhhh, need any healing?”

“Uh-huh!”

It was basically that over and over again. So, I decided to join the fighting myself. And not because it hurt my heart to see Hugo getting beaten up for my sake. I just couldn’t stand to see him blushing while asking for healing each time he got hurt. I wasn’t getting emotional. My sanity stat was just being drained. Definitely.

But Hugo had gotten addicted to being healed by me and if I let things stand, he would undoubtedly put himself in danger to get hurt. I needed to knock the enemies out before that happened.

A pitcher plant big enough to swallow humans alive appeared. It was a plant-type monster that deftly used vines to move. Its pitcher was definitely big enough to trap a human and melt them alive for food.

“O Fire, become a sphere and smite my enemy — {Fireball}.” The reason I was chanting despite not needing to wasn’t to match Hugo’s fighting pace. I just didn’t want Core 219 to learn that I could cast magic without chanting. I had been keeping the same thing a secret from Haku for a long time too.

The fireball hit the pitcher, but aside from some slight burning, it didn’t seem very hurt.

“Huh? Aren’t plant-type monsters weak to fire?”

“Plants don’t burn until they’re dry, and it’s full of water... Hmph!” Hugo

slammed a fist against a burnt part of the plant, opening a large hole into the pitcher. Fluids gushed out and the pitcher collapsed.

Putting aside that punch, it was true that wet plants didn't burn well. Given that these were all living plants, it should be safe to assume that most of them were pretty wet and healthy. Fire still burnt them a bit, but it was hard to call that a weak point.

"Mama, wash meeee." Hugo thrust out his juices-covered hand toward me. *He sure seems calm, considering those juices are literally melting the ground.*

"You can neutralize the acid with the {Poison Hand} skill, so."

"Honestly, you just keep surprising me... {Water Cup}. Here, have some water."

"Heheh, Mama complimented me."

I used the Survival magic {Water Cup} to fill a flask with water, then pour it onto his hands. It seemed the proper way to deal with this monster's acid was to wash it away with water. Naturally I didn't know strong enough Restoration Magic to rebuild body parts, so it was lucky that his hands didn't melt.

"But still. Huh. Fire doesn't work on them. Maybe electricity will? Mmm, I dunno. Feels like it'll probably just get redirected to the ground... Do they have some kind of weak point, maybe?" I murmured to myself in thought and Hugo just dropped the answer right on me.

"The Survival magic {Dry} works good on plants, Mama."

"Huh? Survival magic's fine here?" I replied, surprised by that. {Dry} was used mainly to dry out lumber and wet clothes. It only worked on things you were touching, but it could dry out a whole log in no time. When I used it, a soaked log would end up crackly dry in three seconds.

The majority of plants were weak to being dried out. Even Saboten, resistant to being dried out as they were, would die without water. You could call being dried out as deadly of a weak point to plants as "Minotaurs will die if they can't breathe" is to mammals.

"They're weak to heat and chilling too, but {Dry} works the best."

“...So basically, I need to dry them out first.” This might actually work out. If I could figure out how to turn that into an attack, at least. {Dry} wasn’t a ranged spell, and combining fire and wind spells to form a blast of dry air would be both ineffective and reveal my magic modification abilities.

“For now, I’ll just provide support with fireballs and ice bolts and so on. Don’t get hurt.”

“You’re worried about me... Aaah, Mama, I knew you were nice.” *Uh, yeah, let’s go with that.*

* * *

I discovered a problem as we continued walking. The path leading out on the map was entirely gone. It was likely that Core 219 had destroyed walls and built that corridor specifically to speed up our arrival, then removed it later. The map wasn’t entirely useless, since she probably hadn’t moved the staircases, but... Well, she might have once I left the floor, actually. Or maybe she used a one-time secret passageway like the one from my Dungeon Battle with Ittetsu.

“Hey. You went straight to the Safe Zone, right? Were you using something to guide you?”

“Uh-huh. The walls at intersections would shine and tell me where to go.” *Yeah, looks like Core 219 brought him here. He won’t know how to get out on his own. Maybe we can stumble on some other adventurers and have them take us out... Or really, what’s going on outside anyway? Is there a way for us to send a message out? The menu message functions are... not working. Weird, they work during Dungeon Battles to contact people outside of the dungeon.*

Suddenly, my eyes fell on the Muscle Dude tag marking Hugo. *Hm... Can I use this?* Rokuko attached the tag to Hugo. Since I can see the tag too, it follows that if I tag myself Rokuko should see it too. I should be able to contact Rokuko by changing the tag.

I checked to see if I could change the tag. No problems there. So, I tagged myself “Contact me by changing the tag.” *Okay, now I just wait and see how long it takes Rokuko to notice. Depending on if sh— whoa!*

My tag changed to “Are you safe?” almost immediately. A very Rokuko

question.

“Hugo, I need to think about stuff for a bit. Stay on guard for me.”

“Okay, Mama.” I left Hugo on watch and started changing the tag again.

“I’m safe for now, but I don’t know where the exit is. You?”... Done.

“I’m camping out in front of the dungeon with the Archduke’s soldiers. We’re resting tonight, then Niku and I will infiltrate the dungeon tomorrow at noon.”
...Alright, makes sense.

Rokuko replied with a lot more words than I expected. It felt entirely like we were using an actual chat program. If I had known about this strategy earlier I could have messaged Rokuko without sending a letter.

Rokuko and I chatted back and forth a bit, catching each other up to speed, when I suddenly noticed something. *I’m losing DP each time I change the tag!* Indeed, I had less DP than I had initially brought with me. There was exactly 500 DP left, half of what I had brought with me. *Gah, what a mess! I should have brought way more DP! I shouldn’t have gotten off topic and started making small talk out of relief over being able to contact her! Anyway... It’s probably 1 DP per letter or so.*

I left *“Tag change 1 DP a letter. Contact emergency only”* as a final message, which put me at 450 DP. It was safe to say I couldn’t afford to waste any more DP. Rokuko replied with “K,” a single letter response. *Does that mean “Okay,” or is she being curt to signal the end of the conversation...? Probably both, actually. Rokuko’s pretty good with her {Japanese} skill, she can pull wordplay like this off. I wonder if the DP cost would be different if I were using another language. Let’s not think about that, though. I can test it out later.*

“...Alright. Hugo, I’m back. Let’s keep going.”

“Okay, let’s go.” said Hugo, staring at me. *Uhhh... Oh, he wants me to compliment him. Yeah, yeah. I’m very proud of you.* I complimented Hugo and he started walking, looking satisfied.

Before long, we found a stream.

“Oh, look, Mama. There’s running water.”

“Yep. The water’s pretty clear... Oh, but don’t drink it. Might make you sick.”

“It’ll be fine if I use {Purification}.” *Oh, {Purification}’s not just for cleaning, it can kill germs too?* “But I like the water you make more!”

“...C-Cool.” {Water Cup}, survival magic that made a cup’s worth of water. I had used it to wash acid off his hand a little earlier. It was a weak spell overall and most people would need to work hard to make two liters of water over a day. For me, though, water just gushed out of my hands. Survival magic is pretty convenient, you never have to worry about getting lost and running out of water.

“...Oh yeah. Where’s this water coming from?”

“Oh! Right, water always flows down, we can go up by following the stream!” Despite his age regression, his history as the number two of a large criminal organization wasn’t just for show. He immediately came up with the same idea I had. Though there was no guarantee whatsoever that the stream would lead to stairs.

“Well, I dunno if this will be the right call, but let’s try it.” Hugo and I got into the stream and started wading up it.

Flower Garden of Light, Core 219’s Perspective

Core 219 naturally detected Keima’s escape the moment it happened.

“Ahaha. I see you escaped just as I expected, Keima. But you are merely a dancer acting out a play on the palm of my hand. You may be the protagonist or perhaps the main heroine, but in the end, that is trivial to the showrunner.” Keima had transformed into a Succubus, looking like a girl much to Core 219’s tastes. In this form, he was much more of a beautiful, delicate flower. Core 219 watched him through the monitor with satisfaction.

“Indeed, the looks of a dancer are her most important feature. Beautiful. All the more reason the muscle-bound oaf by her side is unbearable to look at. Well, I suppose in terms of a brainless side character, he is just barely passable.” If he were a beautiful young man he could be a knight protecting a young maiden (Keima), but as he was, Keima instead looked like an unfortunate young

girl being dragged to the slave market. In reality, Keima did look so afraid of the man that such an interpretation held surprising weight.

“This story has a spice of its own... perhaps?” With that thought in mind, Core 219 first sent a Dance Flower after them experimentally. Dance Flowers lived all throughout the [Flower Garden of Light]. They came in a variety of colors, from red to white to yellow to pink and so on. It was quite a sight to have them line up and dance. Core 219 even enjoyed having different colored ones breed to give birth to children with two colors.

But the muscle man Hugo murdered the flower without understanding an ounce of the entertainment they could provide. Then, of all things, he even put a petal on his mouth and sucked on it.

“To not only kill the flower, but to suck out its honey as well... Aaah, how barbaric! Humans simply do not understand the fun one can have with flowers!” Sucking honey from a flower, to Core 219, was the equivalent to a human seeing a monster rip off a friend’s arm then suck the blood and guts out of it. It was so horrifying she wanted to gouge out her eyes.

Naturally, eating other living beings as part of the food chain was just how nature worked, but Core 219 subsisted on water, light, and dirt. The food chain was as alien to her as it was horrifying. From that perspective, Keima came off as a quite moral person, since he rejected the honey. The only thing one should eat is fruit.

In any case, far be it from Core 219 to idly watch her monsters be attacked. She decided to set up a trap to get revenge for the Dance Flower’s death. A simple treasure chest that would launch spears when opened. One who greedily opened the chest with their guard down would find themselves dead before they knew what happened. The spears would gut them clean through.

Clever Keima wouldn’t fall for it, but the barbaric Hugo would. Core 219 set the trap with that in mind. Keima was a hostage, but she had no reason to keep Hugo alive. She was finished with the ugly man the moment he brought Keima to her.

“Mama, a treasure chest! Let’s open it!”

“Stop! That’s probably a tra—”

As expected, Hugo ignored Keima's warnings and opened the chest. *Got you!* Core 219's lips curved into a grin at the success of her plot. However.

"Hmph!" The spears which should have pierced Hugo fell to the ground, broken.

"...What?" Core 219 and Keima (through the monitor) both had completely stunned expressions on their faces. After all, Hugo was unharmed. Barely a scratch on him. Despite having spears launched directly at him from close range.

"This human is tougher than I imagined. I suppose I will need to put real effort into disposing of him, then." Wooden spears didn't have enough attack power to harm him, at least. She would need to prepare something much stronger.

And so she did. She sent an Orchid Mantis, a bug-type monster with high attack power. It was fair to say that flowers and bugs had an inseparable relationship with one another. Flowers in general could not move, and so they bred through bugs carrying their pollen. Even flowers that possessed the ability to move tended to lazily allow bugs to execute their breeding.

Point being, the [Flower Garden of Light] had many bug-type monsters too. Among those bug-type monsters she prepared an Orchid Mantis because they disguised themselves as flowers to deceive their enemies, and fake flowers or not, they looked beautiful. In short. Core 219 liked them as well.

"Now, have him step off this stage!" Core 219 ordered the Orchid Mantis to attack. As expected, its scythe dug deep into Hugo's left arm.

"Perfect! Continue on, Orchid Mantis, and cut it clean off!" But unfortunately it stopped a quarter of the way into Hugo's arms, and could go no further.

"Stay back, Mama... hrrrgh!" Not only that, but he ripped its scythes right off.

"Whaaat?! Don't tell me he's unharmed... No, I see that he has taken damage. So why does he wear such a confident smile?! Why, why, why can he smile despite being so hurt?!"

"Ahaha, it hurts, but I'm fine, Mamma! I'm so happy I got to protect you!" Hugo then humiliated the disarmed Orchid Mantis further with a smile. He snapped its neck, kicked it over, and ripped off every limb from its body.

“Oooh, so cruel! This is too cruel! Humans truly are monstrous creatures!” It was the work of a devil. From an adventurer’s perspective, thoroughly disabling bug-type monsters was just common sense given their persistent resilience, but it was hard to say they weren’t taking it too far. Though they really didn’t have a choice, given that they would be risking their lives otherwise. Core 219 understood that logically, but still, she had always felt anger each time she saw the residents of her dungeon be brutally murdered.

“They have Restoration magic too, I see... It seems I have no choice but to resort to dirty tactics! Go forth, War Cacti! Destroy those ruffians! Destroy them!” Core 219 ordered the cacti running around to attack. They were simple Spawned Monsters, which gave them strength in disposability and numbers.

The War Cacti launched tackles so strong that their thick needles could pierce five millimeters into copper plates. It was precisely because cacti stored water inside themselves that they could build up so much inertia. However, Hugo had skin as strong as steel, so they did nothing to him.

“Look out, Mama!” The muscle man stepped in front of Keima and defensively spread out his arms. The horde of War Cacti rushed down the straight corridor and the one in the lead slammed into him at full speed. Cactus juice sprayed everywhere as its plant flesh exploded. But perhaps due to his usage of some skill or another, not a drop of water or chunk of plant flesh hit Keima.

Its sacrifice was not in vain, though. A needle pierced deeply into Hugo’s muscular chest and it was driven in deeper with each tackle of the other War Cacti. Each group of three managed to land about ten tackles. After the storm of thirty hard tackles in a row, the corridor was empty save for the needle-filled Hugo and the successfully protected Keima standing behind him.

Subsequently, “Ngrah!” Hugo let out a yell and puffed out his chest, pushing out the needles and letting them drop onto the floor.

“H-Hey, are you okay? That seemed kinda intense.”

“Uh-huh! I’m okay, Mama! But what about you?” Keima couldn’t see the front of Hugo from his perspective, but either way Hugo smiled and replied as if nothing had happened. To him, the cacti assault probably had been nothing. He

was barely hurt, and he was fine as long as Mam—... as long as Keima was fine.

“...The tackles of a War Cacti horde had no effect on him. How could he smile with that many needles piercing his chest?! I do not understand humans! Grrr, next! Go forth, suicide bombing Claymore!” Claymores, known as the suicide bomb plant, were box-like plant-type monsters that stabbed their pointed seeds into their prey. Under normal circumstances, the Claymores would simply keep stabbing until their weakened prey died, then eat them. But the dungeon monster Claymores under Core 219’s leadership had honed their murderous qualities and were customized to be even more deadly.

They approached their enemies, and...

“Mama, look out!” Hugo immediately hugged the Claymore. It exploded from extremely up close and launched its seeds directly into Hugo’s chest. The damage was enormous, but Hugo took all of the seeds himself without letting them spray around.

“Ngh!” Naturally, even Hugo didn’t survive that without a scratch. He was bleeding.

“You okay, Mama?”

“...Thanks to you. Uhhh, need any healing?”

“Uh-huh!”

But in the end, Keima’s Restoration magic patched him right up. The only lasting damage was the pain inflicted.

“So why would he throw himself into danger like that? What is this man thinking?! I simply do not understand, have I made some mistake here...? Should I never have exploited him in the first place?” He hurt himself, but sought nothing in return. That was behavior which largely didn’t exist among plants. Yet adventurers in her dungeon would at times become self-sacrificial to protect their allies. Core 219 knew what this was called thanks to her many years of experience.

“This is... love. I see! It is love...!” Love. Out of all the emotions that Core 219 knew, love was the most beautiful. With love in mind, her perspective of Hugo and Keima changed completely.

“...{Fireball}!” And over time, the young maiden (Keima) began to participate in battle as well, rather than sit back and just be protected. The maiden, through her desire to not see the wild beast Hugo wounded in combat, became a Valkyrie and chose to fight by his side.

“They’re weak to heat and chilling too, but—...”

“...So basically, I need to dry them out first.”

The beast seemed happy to communicate with the maiden through sharing its knowledge. The maiden had at some point embraced such.

The beast kidnapped the maiden out of love. Touched by said love, the maiden was warming up bit by bit. It was a tale as old as time, and Core 219 loved stories. That gave her no choice but to leave them together.

“Very well! Out of respect for your love, I will cage you together!” Such was Core 219’s decision. She would imprison them together and raise them as a pair. But first came weakening them and locking them into a stronger cage that they could not escape from.

“...They’re following the stream? Hm, in that case, I can predict where they are going.” Core 219 smiled and operated the menu.

Keima’s Perspective

We followed the stream and it took us to a wide, open room.

“This room... has a door. Are we in a Boss Room, maybe?” In which case...

“Watch out, Mama. I’ve got a baaad feeling about this.” I thought the same, regardless of Hugo’s input. That said, if we were in the Boss Room, we’d need to beat the boss to advance further. That was an iron rule of dungeons. If we could pass through without doing so, it was merely a fake Boss Room meant to deceive.

Suddenly, the room got dark. I readied myself and Hugo stood in front of me protectively like a wall. A spotlight appeared in the center of the room.

“Hahahahaha!” Loud laughter echoed throughout the room. Not mine or Hugo’s. Core 219’s. Her white and gold clothing sparkled as she approached,

striking a confusing pose that seemingly left her completely open to attack.

“...What’s her plan, here?” Despite Hugo being here, a human completely unaffiliated with the secret underside of dungeons, she was showing herself. Maybe she was one of those Dungeon Cores that were also their own final boss.

“You two are splendid! Absolutely splendid! Splendid!” She said it three times, presumably for emphasis. And as she spoke, Hugo rushed forward to pound her face in. But thick vines sprouted from the floor to block him. They wiggled like tentacles.

“It is ever so boorish to interrupt a speech. But if you insist, allow me to begin.” The room lightened up and the ground that Core 219 was standing on started to... wait. That wasn’t ground, it was a massive bundle of vines. A huge something covered in vines emerged from the ground with Core 219 on top of it.

It was like a bundle of snakes, yet still a single entity. A huge stem sprouted from its center, then bloomed into a massive flower with huge petals. It was a red flower that looked to be about four meters tall and wide. With its pistil sticking out, it looked entirely like a space antenna.

“Hahahaha! Let’s see just how strong that love of yours is!”

“Th-That’s... That’s a Giga-Plant! Mama, get back!” Giga-Plant. It was indeed a gigantic plant.

...That better not be Core 219’s true body. Like what, is the human form on top just bait, basically? Will the dungeon collapse and bury us if we kill her? Actually, that soul pollution stuff Leona mentioned is still something I gotta watch out for. This would be a good opportunity to finish her off, but I might need to be more careful...

“Hey, is that your real body?”

“Nay! Fight to your heart’s content, and prevail if it is within your power! Unleash your love upon it!” *Oh, it’s not her real body. No point holding back then.*

“...Oh boy, Mama. She said we’re in love.”

“Don’t blush!”

Hugo and I stepped back from the rampaging vines.

“Guess I’ll try attacking it from range. Shoot forth, ice, and pierce mine enemies — {Ice Bolt}.”

“Okay, I will too! Fighting skill, {Flying Fist}!” My ice bolt and Hugo’s flying fist (some kind of chi blast?) sped toward the Giga-Plant — but we weren’t facing an idle foe.

“Go forth, Artillery Balsam!” Several tube-shaped Artillery Balsam flowers sprouted from Giga-Plant’s body like cannons and shot seeds which blocked our attacks. Or really, the seeds overwhelmed our attacks and we had to roll to avoid them.

“Yes, yes, go forth! Attack and be attacked in turn! Show me what you’re worth!” screamed Core 219, striking such a dazzling pose on top of the Giga-Plant that we could see from where we were. As she did so, Claymores wiggled out of the Giga-Plant and came walking this way on their roots.

“W-Wait, seriously?! That thing has more plants inside of it?!”

“That’s a baby making mother-type monster, Mama!”

“Alright, so it’s like a factory for plants! A plant for plants! That’s very clever!” I wasn’t sure if the plant (factory) / plant (plant) pun worked in the fantasy world’s language, but in any case we launched more long-distance attacks while fleeing from the Claymores and Artillery Balsams. Not that our attacks seemed to be doing any damage.

“Geez. Can we even beat this thing?” It would probably be easier to get caught and then escape again. A thought which probably gave me bad karma somehow. I suddenly felt my left leg getting pulled. I face-planted on the ground at full speed, and then got lifted up... by one of the Giga-Plant’s tentacles.

“Nghoooooh?!”

“Mama! I’ll come sav-... ngh!” The monsters all focused their attacks on Hugo, which forced him to go on the defensive. Vines wrapped around me as he

continued the fight.

“W-Wait, hold on, what’s with these vines?!”

“Ahaha! It is tradition for the maiden to be tied up! This is the legendary ‘Rope Dress’ technique that I discovered in a book brought by an adventurer, titled *The Book of Bondage*! Mmm, perfect, you look splendid!” Tentacles squeezed my entire body tightly.

“Ngggh?!”

“Ah ha ha! Quite cute and pretty you are, yes indeed. Shall we try the next form? There are many more techniques I know.” The vines briefly untangled, then formed hexagonal shapes over my stomach and chest.

“Perfect! This is known as the ‘Turtle Shell’ technique! Ohoho, those hexagons are ever so beautiful!”

“Nghaaaah!” Core 219 played with my body like it was a toy. *Come on, this is embarrassing! What kind of bondage is this! I’m not into BDSM! And my crotch! Vines are digging into my crotch, it hurts so bad gaaaah they’re gonna burst! Help! Someone Help! Nggggh, if only charms worked on Core 219, I’d force her to stop this!*



“Perhaps I shall try a reverse flamingo next... oh, goodness!”

“Let go... of Mamaaaa! NGRAAAAAAAH!” Hugo charged with an aura of power radiating off his entire body.

(“Uh oh boss, looks like he’s gone berserk.”)

(“At a time like this?! Wait, maybe this is a good time?!”) It seemed that Hugo’s attack and defense shot up when he was on a rampage. Nothing the monsters did affected him at all.

“Graaah! Mama, Mama, MAMAAAAAAA!” Hugo ripped apart the vines binding me and thereby saved me. “Haaah, haaah! Maaa, Mamaaaa...”

“Whoa, don’t rub your face against me. Let go. I mean, please don’t, but come ooon!”

“...This appears to be the ugly lust of a beast, but perhaps, this too is love? Shall I continue watching?”

“Stop looking! Let go, Hugo! Back! Back! The enemy is over there! Go!”

“GRAAAAH!” Hugo charged the Giga-Plant while roaring. But a thick, log-esque vine smacked him away. That didn’t seem to hurt him either, but at this rate we wouldn’t be inflicting any damage at all on the monster.

“Hmmm, in that case, I shall launch stronger attacks against you! O, light!” The bright room got even brighter, with sunlight streaming in from seemingly nowhere. The light made the giant flower on the Giga-Plant’s front side start sparkling.

“Charge! Charge! Chaaaarge! Light, more light! Aaah, this feels stupendous!” Core 219 was posing dramatically on top of Giga-Plant, euphoric beneath the streaming light. And then.

“Compression Ray!” A concentrated beam of light shot from the giant shining flower’s central pistil. A moment later a massive explosion shook the room, hitting me with a shock wave so intense I was knocked to the ground.

“Ahaha! How did you like that?! This is the light that purifies all. Fear not, I will not fully charge it every time, and I will take care to avoid any direct hits.”
Uuuuh, okay, this is pretty bad.

“Actually, why did the light explode anyway? What kind of physics is that?!”
Though, maybe it was some kind of attack magic. The large flower is Giga-Plant’s main cannon. Guess I should avoid going in front of it... wait, the flower’s turning this way! Come on, at least turn the whole Giga-Plant! Gaaah!

“Chaaarge!”

“Ngh... Gate, open. I summon thee, magic-wielding monster of stone. Serve me — {Summon Gargoyle}!”

“Compression Ray!”

I attempted to block the laser using a Gargoyle as a shield. *Tch, there goes one card out of my sleeve.* The gargoyle standing in front of me became a living (?) shield and exploded into pieces after the laser hit it.

“I see you blocked the laser. But there are more where that came from. Charge!” *Ngh, at this rate I’m just gonna defend myself into a corner. What are my options... Would chantless magic do the trick? Should I use a gravity bomb? Wait, no. That’s light!* I spent 5 DP to buy a large mirror.

“This should reflect the light!”

“Ah! No, Mama! Run!” screamed Hugo. I reacted on pure instinct and threw the mirror aside, jumping away in the process. The ray of light hit the mirror and with a loud shattering sound it exploded.

“Ahahaha! In truth, this Compression Ray is a skill exclusive to plants and utilizes seeds within the light. Too bad!” So basically, the rays of light were carrying explosive seeds.

“Gah, that’s not even a ray of light then! Wait... Hugo, you’re back to normal?”

“Uh-huh, I cooled off after getting knocked down. I’ve heard lots of stories about people trying mirrors on Giga-Plant light rays and failing. So I just shouted out when I saw you trying it too. Sorry for scaring you.” *Oh, huh. Man... This guy sure knows a lot. He really is a top of the line adventurer.*

“No worries, and thanks. I owe you one.”

“Eheh, you’re welcome, Mama.” The forty-year-old dude smiled happily.

Yeah, I've gotten used to this.

"But what should we do, Mama? We're going to lose if this keeps up..."

"At this point we've just gotta play it by ear and do whatever comes to mind! Hugo, carry me!"

"Got it!" Hugo hefted me up. *Ngh, a bridal carry! But at least this way, both my hands are free.*

"Mama, it's gonna be a little shaky!"

"Yeah, focus on dodging the attacks!"

What were plants weak to? Heat, dryness, and being eaten? Maybe I should use {Ultra Transformation} to turn into a mouse and bite it... Nah, a single mouse wouldn't be able to do much. That said, even if I could summon a horde of them, they would be wiped out in seconds by the cannon. Not even splitting them up would work with those Claymores around. I'm limited to what I can buy with the five hundred-ish DP left to me, so... Whatever, no time to think! Gotta experiment!

I bought a Molotov cocktail (25 DP). Once a fire got started, it would dry out and burn all the way to death! I used the Survival magic spell {Ignite} to light the cocktail, then throw it. {Fire!}

"My my! Hot, very hot." Not only did the vines block the Molotov, they easily put out the fire by slapping the ground. *Ngh, that wasn't enough?!*

"I'll slow it down with ice... Shoot forth, ice, and pierce mine enemies — {Ice Bolt}!"

"Those wimpy little ice shards won't have any effect on this Giga-Plant!" *Gah, they really won't! Next!*

"How about this! O Seed, bud and grow — {Grow Weed}!"

I scattered vegetable seeds (5 DP) and forced them to grow. I would suck all the nutrients out of the ground!

"What's this, a present for me? Goodness, these are some fine vegetables you've given me... O Plant, change your being and become my servant — {Create Creature: Plant}!" *Did these tomatoes, cabbages, and eggplants really*

just grow mouths?! Are they really attacking me?! Come on, fairy tale horror magic like that is just too much!

“Look out, Mama! Ngraaaah!” Hugo spun to block the attacking vegetables with his back. *Another failure! I didn’t expect her to use those against me!*

“Hyah! Hmph! Hah!” Hugo crushed the creature vegetables one after another with backward kicks. *Man, why are you so competent?! You sure would be a lady killer if you weren’t obsessed with a cross-dressing dude!*

...Wait. Something about that seems important to me. But what’s important? I closed my eyes to think. You would be a lady killer if you weren’t obsessed with a cross-dressing dude...? A lady killer, cross-dressing dude... Lady killer. Lady killer? Cross-dressing, cute dressing, loli? No no, wrong train of thought. Killer. That’s it. But not lady... something else.

...Weed killer! That’s it, I need weed killer!

“Hugo, there’s one more thing I want to try. Got it in you for one last charge?”

“For sure! I’ll never give up as long as I’m with you, Mama! Now and forever!” *Not really sure why, but he’s motivated!*

I went ahead and bought weed killer (10 DP). It was liquid weed killer in a two liter plastic jug resembling a gas can. I popped open the lid.

“Hugo! Run around, I’m gonna spray this stuff everywhere!”

“Alright!”

I sprayed the weed killer around and every place the liquid touched changed form immediately. The Giga-Plant writhed, turning purple where the liquid had gotten onto it.

“Ngh?! Wh-What in the world is that stuff?!” yelled Core 219, sounding panicked. Honestly, not even I expected it to be so effective. *Uh. Since when was weed killer this deadly? Isn’t this a bit dangerous? Or maybe it just worked faster since this is a moving plant. But the details don’t matter here. Just the results.*

“Hahaha, seems like this stuff works just fine!”

“Good job, Mama!”

“Yep! Now c’mon Hugo, spread it with me!” I bought another weed killer canister, which I gave to Hugo. I got watering cans (2 DP) too so I could spread it more efficiently.

“Haha! Look, Hugo, it’s shrinking so fast!”

“Wow, mama, we’ll beat it in no time like this!”

“S-Stop! STOP THIIIIIS!” Core 219’s screams fell on deaf ears and we continued to spread the weed killer. It wasn’t just killing the Giga-Plant’s tentacles, either. The plant-type monsters it birthed and the creature vegetables I had grown all withered and died in no time.

“Look, look Mama! You can spread a lot more if you do it this way!”

“Hahaha, good job, Hugo! Keep it up. Oh, but make sure you don’t get any on me.” Hugo had stretched out his arms with watering cans in both hands while spinning around like a sprinkler. *I shall dub this technique, the Double Weedkiller Clothesline.*

“Ngggh, i-it hurts! G-Giga-Plant, aaah, no! Nooo, noooo...” The vines were barely moving now.

“Hey, Hugo, this weed killer stuff works a lot better if you get it on the roots. Seems like the Giga-Plant’s weak enough for that to be possible. So basically, go get it done.”

“Uh-huh, be right back!” I handed Hugo more weed killer. He happily took it up to the Giga-Plant’s roots, as it breathed its dying breaths like a bug despite being a plant.

“S-Stop thiiiis! Dooon’t...!” Naturally, we didn’t listen to Core 219’s desperate pleas. The Giga-Plant was deceased after barely a minute of pouring.

* * *

“Guess that’s a win.” I said, watching Core 219 weep over the Giga-Plant’s immobile corpse. The boss had been killed, and thus the Boss Room’s door opened.

“Haaah, haaah... Curses! I gravely underestimated you, Keima...”

“You’re the one who said beat you if I could.”

“I-I did indeed say that... Ngh. You have defeated me.” Core 219 hung her head in sorrow. Hugo asked if we should kill her, but I didn’t want my soul corrupted by the God of Light or whatever. Killing her would be a hard no from me. But since we were in her dungeon, she could escape from any bindings by just withdrawing the rope. We had no choice but to leave her there. Thus, we headed to the door opposite to the Boss Room’s inner door.

“...H-Hmph. Still, you two will find no escape from this place,” said Core 219 right before we left the room.

“What do you mean?”

“Gooooood work eliminating my Giga-Plant. But the only thing beyond that door is a water source! I’m sure you have guessed by now, Keima, but this is merely a boss room I built to catch you after you started following the stream.” *Ah, okay. Makes sense. Guess she’s trying to say that we’ll have to go back to wandering in search of the exit, then.*

“Nothing but a water source, huh?”

“Indeed, nothing but a water source. Though I can imagine no better place for a rest.”

“Hm... Hugo, go grab her. I have something I want to talk with her about.”

“Okaaaay, Mama.” Hugo happily pinned Core 219’s arms behind her back and made her stand up.

“Ngh, u-unhand me! Do not touch me with your disgusting hands, you human male!”

“Whoa, whoa, don’t call someone disgusting just because they’re a human guy—”

“No, I am referring to him being disgusting specifically. Not even I would call most of the normal human males living in Tsia disgusting.”

“Ah. Okay, fair.” *That reminds me, I used to think Hugo was disgusting too. I kinda got used to him during that fight with the Giga-Plant.*

Anyway, Core 219 was coming with us. She probably could have escaped in a second if she wanted to, but it seemed that she would be playing nice for now.

And just as she said, beyond the door was nothing but a small room with a water source.

“See, it’s just as I said.”

“Yep, seems so. By the way, why are you using water sources to make streams of water in your dungeon? You being considerate about adventurers needing water?”

“What reason could I have other than to give water to my plants? It is not for the humans.” Core 219 let out a haughty “hmph.”

“Really now? That’s convenient.”

“Convenient?” *Whoops, accidentally said that out loud. Not that it matters.*

“Anyway. Uhhhh, kinda late to be asking this, but what should I call you? Do you have a name?”

“Call me whatever you li— No, wait. Hm. If you insist, call me ‘brother dear,’ or something to that effect!” *What the heck is she saying? But I guess at this point, it hardly matters.*

“...Alright. So, brother dear (?), I want you to take us out of this dungeon.”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that, not even for my sweet little sister. You are a hostage towards *her*, after all.” Core 219 was speaking in a dramatic tone once again, probably due to having cheered up a little.

“Hm. Well, I wanted to be on good terms with you since you’re the shadow ruler of Tsia and I don’t want us getting in each other’s way from now on, but alright. Guess I don’t have any choice here,” I said a little dramatically. Core 219 was rubbing off on me. She urged me on with a curious look. I grinned, then took out the can of weedkiller I had been spraying around earlier.

“Now then, brother dear. What do you think would happen if I poured this into the water source?”

Core 219’s eyes shot wide open.

“A-Actually, nothing. You surprised me a moment ago, but I can easily minimize the damage by withdrawing the water.” I stealthily used some of my remaining DP to buy plankton (the kind I had used in my Dungeon Battle with

the [Flame Caverns], 1 DP per 1,000 plankton). I plopped them right into the canister, then shook it around to get the plankton moving.

“...Take a closer look at it. Through your map.”

“Through the map...? Ah?! What is the meaning of this?!” Seemed like she did indeed check the map. An expression of shock arose on Core 219’s face.

“Enemy dots... a thousand of them?! Did a Slime split a thousand times in that?!”

“You don’t need to know. Now, brother dear. Can you withdraw a liquid that has enemies inside of it? A simple question with a simple answer.” I knew the answer. You can’t. In both the Dungeon Battle with Ittetsu and the Triple Threat Dungeon Battle with Haku, water with enemies inside of it hadn’t been withdrawn.

“Now, let’s have a thought experiment. What would happen to this lively green dungeon if this stuff got poured into your water sources? Hm?”



“You fiend!”

“I think I’ll give you one more chance. Brother dear. Would you be ever so kind and take little ol’ me out of the dungeon?”

“Ngh, b-but... Keima, you are... a hostage...” I tilted the canister over the water source. Drip.

“Ngh! W-Wait!”

“...Hm? Forgive me, brother dear, I couldn’t quite hear that.” *I’m probably looking like a real villain right now. I can’t help it, this is just too fun.*

But since Core 219 looked relieved to see me pause, I had to keep tilting the canister.

“Wait wait! Stop, stop this!”

“Haaah... Brother dear? That’s not what you should be saying. Not it at all. Do you understand what you *should* be saying?”

“...Fine. I will do as you say, so get that filth away from the water source.” I tilted it further. *Oh man, it’s gonna start pouring out! Just a bit more!*

“Stop! Why?! I said I will agree to your demands!”

“Your attitude.”

“What?”

“Is that reaaally how you should be talking to me? Hm, brother deaaar?” I wasn’t sure why I was getting so into this. Probably the Succubus transformation. Cause I mean, my Succubus-polluted instincts were screaming at me: Core 219 loves roleplaying. So, I was roleplaying a bit for her. I could tell she was squealing on the inside each time I called her “brother dear.” Definitely.

“...V-Very well then. Please, be so kind, as to stop...”

“I can’t hear you, brother dear.”

“Please stop! I’m begging you!” said Core 219, bowing her head. For some reason, Hugo was nodding with satisfaction.

“Hmmm. I’ll stop, then. And do you know what you are going to do for me in return, brother dear?”

“Y-Yes! I will guide you outside the dungeon!”

“Is that all?”

“...I-If you wish, you... you may do with my body as you like...?”

“Uh, no thanks.” *Whoops. Forgot to keep acting.*

“...What are you after? DP?”

“I wouldn’t mind some DP, but I don’t intend to be greedy here. Let’s see... First, you guide us out of the dungeon. Second, you don’t come after me again. And finally... Don’t tell anyone about my Succubus transformation. That’s all.” I said, to which Core 219 nodded.

“...Understood.”

“And while we’re at it, how about we be allies from now on?”

“That is, hrm... A bit too much, given how little I am receiving in return.” answered Core 219, having probably calmed down a bit due to me dropping my act. *Dang, I should have gone all the way.*

“Okay, in that case... I won’t tell Haku about your revolution.”

“...Very well. I will promise to not betray *her* within the next one hundred years. How does that sound?”

“Good enough. And to be clear, *she* is Haku, right?”

“Of course.”

I nodded. With her revolution against Haku out of the equation, she had no reason to interfere with me. I didn’t have a problem with her and she didn’t have a problem with me.

“Alright, let me repeat the conditions. Be sure to agree with them.” I used {Trinity} to make the oral agreement a binding one.

“...Contract magic, hm. You came well prepared, now I have no means of fooling you.”

“Were you planning to do something that lame?”

“No, I just felt like mentioning it. You defeated me here. I will accept my loss with grace, and protect our promise.”

And so, Core 219 wouldn't be attacking me anymore. I let out a sigh of relief. Also, for some reason, Hugo looked really happy.

...Wait. Maybe I can turn Hugo into a trustworthy servant by binding him with contract magic? He did show a pretty impressive level of competence in this dungeon. If put to use on our side, he'd probably do a lot of good work for us. Putting aside that he's a criminal.

“Hugo. Let's make a contract too.”

“Okay! A promise with Mama!” Hugo beamed a smile, making it apparent he had been waiting for this. *Well, here we go.*

“First, don't tell anyone about Dungeon Cores or me.”

“Okay. It'll be our little secret!”

“...Next, avoid getting close to me as much as possible, and never touch me without permission.”

“Why?” *Oof, he's not too happy about this one. Uuuh, how should I frame this...*

“...Mama wants her strong little boy to be more independent?”

“Okay!” *Heck yeah. Now he's not gonna touch me out of nowhere!*

“Alright, and finally, gather information on the pieces of the Divine Bedding for me. Excluding the pillow and futon.”

“That will make you happy, Mama?”

“Yep, I'll love it.”

“Okay then, I'll do it!” Hugo agreed to the contract so quickly I began to wonder if I should have made one with him earlier. *I can finally rest now... Holy crap, I'm so tired!*

...Also, this canister is actually full of water I made with {Water Cup}. Wouldn't want the plankton to die in the weedkiller, after all. I'm glad she didn't notice.

Core 219 took us to the entrance of the [Flower Garden of Light] and that was that.

Epilogue

“And so, we’re here. I don’t imagine you mind me leaving you prior to the exit?”

“Yeah. Definitely don’t want you going outside and being seen by anyone.”

“Indeed, especially given that the guards have returned.” *Oh yeah, there were some guards Hugo knocked the crap out of. Uh... How long ago was that, anyway? I’m pretty sure I talked to Rokuko at night, and a lot’s happened since then, so it might be morning already? It’s hard to keep track of time inside a dungeon since there’s always light...*

“In which case, farewell! May we meet again, Keima, my beloved little sister!” said Core 219 before striking a weird pose and moonwalking away for some unfathomable reason. Flowers bloomed at her feet, but really, I had no idea how she was moonwalking on this vine-covered ground. I was kinda curious. *Also, don’t call me your little sister.*

“Hugo, this is where we say goodbye. Nothing good will come from us being seen leaving the dungeon together.”

“Aw... Guess we won’t be seeing each other for awhile, Mama... Bye! I’ll finish the mission you gave me, Mama!”

“Thanks. Good luck, and don’t forget to send me a report every now and again, you hear?”

Upon reaching the exit to the dungeon, Hugo gracefully departed on a heroic journey. And immediately had to fight off soldiers trying to capture him, it seemed, so I decided to step away and hide for a bit. Eventually I noticed that I was still transformed into a Succubus, so I canceled the possession. I had been transformed into a Succubus for so long that I was starting to grow accustomed to the Succubus state. *That was close.*

I grew taller, giving me the line of sight I was used to. Which reminded me that I was naked. I switched into a Wearable Golem set I had in {Storage}.

“...Uhhh, testing?” My voice was back to normal too. Whew. *I love freedom!* I struck a quiet pose of victory.

“Yuuup. You did good,” said Kosaki.

“You friggin’ bet I did, holy cow. This sucked. I’m never going to transform into a Succubus again.”

“Awww, don’t say that! At least try to transform once a day! Like, before going to bed, or something!”

“Not a chance. Why should I suffer with cross-dressing every day...? Anyway, time for you to be quiet. I’m leaving the dungeon.” I silenced Kosaki and left the dungeon. It was bright outside. Apparently, it was indeed morning already.

“Boy am I tired... Whoa!” The second I stuck my head out of the dungeon, I was surrounded by a group of soldiers in clanking armor. Five of them pointed their spears at me. Not gonna lie, I broke out in a cold sweat. *Am I gonna have to break the resolve I just steeled and transform into a Succubus to escape?!*

“We are in dire circumstances, so follow our instructions without pulling anything funny! Understood?!”

“Uh, okay?” Thankfully, it seemed that they had problems of their own. *I’ll just wait and see for now.*

“Forgive our aggression, but first state whether you have any intent to oppose us soldiers of the Tsia army!”

“Uh, er, no. I don’t.”

“Then I will continue my line of questioning!” *Wait, I get it. Yeah. They’re super on guard because Hugo just busted through them. This is probably related to us breaking into the dungeon to begin with, too.*

“State your name, your Adventurer’s Guild rank, and the date you entered the dungeon, as well as your reason for doing so!”

“Uhhh, I’m Keima. Town chief of Goren and a D-Rank. I’m pretty sure I entered the dungeon yesterday. But I didn’t have a reason for it myself.” I answered the questions honestly, which led to more questions.

“A D-Rank? This is a dungeon that requires a C-Rank to enter. You entered

without permission?”

“Yeah, though not on purpose. Hugo of the Last Commune kidnapped me and brought me here. I just now managed to escape the dungeon.” The guards made eye contact, then lowered their weapons.

“Excuse us, Sir Keima. The one we believe to have kidnapped you just left the [Flower Garden of Light] moments ago.”

“Oh, interesting.” *They sure got polite fast... Though to be honest, they were pretty polite before, too. Forgive us for our aggression, and so on.*

“I’m guessing the Archduke sent you guys?”

“Yes. But we nonetheless needed to be as careful as possible. Please forgive the hassle. Also, you have citizens waiting for you at the rest area,” said the guard, pointing at a building by the dungeon entrance. It was basically a reception office for those entering the dungeon, plus a barracks for the guards.

“...Uh, by the way, is there any punishment for entering a dungeon at too low of a rank?”

“No, not in particular. The rank limit is there to stop individuals too weak to survive the dungeon from entering it.” I *had* been dragged into the dungeon against my will. It would be pretty unreasonable to punish me with that in mind. All the blame fell on Hugo in the end. *Yep, he sure is convenient.*

“I imagine that you are tired, so we may return once you have rested. We will send a messenger to the Archduke.”

“Thanks, I think I will,” I said, opening the door to the rest area and going inside.

“Keima!” As expected, Rokuko was there waiting for me. She dashed forward and clung to me the second she saw me.

“You’re safe! I mean, I believed in you! I believed in you, but still!”

“Yep, I’m safe. I managed to protect my rear, too, at a great cost...” I rubbed Rokuko’s head as she nestled into me. A look around the room showed that Ichika was there too. *Oh, huh, Niku’s not here.*

“Yo, my bad, Master. We were totes gonna go looking in the dungeon for you

ourselves, but like, y'know."

"Don't worry about it. Where's Niku?"

"She's back at Tsia, like, still guarding Maiodore and all that." Right. I knew that from my tag-based chat with Rokuko, but Niku had prioritized our quest. Not to mention that only C-Ranks could enter the dungeon anyway. She and the others could have gone inside with the B-Rank cards we got from Haku, but I wanted to avoid using those as much as possible.

"And that's how we ended up stuck waiting for her. I was super surprised when I was watching you on the map and suddenly a tag popped up. But that was the last time you said anything, so if you didn't get out of the dungeon before Niku showed up, I was going to use the cards we got from Haku."

"Makes sense. Sorry for worrying you. Gonna have to give Niku a big thanks for her working hard on that quest without me."

"You should. She's really depressed that she wasn't able to stop you from getting kidnapped." *Yeah, I can imagine that.* But my thoughts were interrupted by Rokuko feeling my body over.

"So, Keima. That guy didn't do anything, um, w-weird to you, right? He didn't kiss you? He definitely didn't nom on your ears, right?"

"He did nothing. I did nothing. I'm safe and untouched." *I'll keep quiet about all the close calls I narrowly avoided. All's well that ends well.*

"Really? Like *really* really? You're not pregnant or anything?" asked Rokuko, patting my stomach.

"Huh? That doesn't even make sense, kisses don't make people pregnant. You should know this, yo— ..." I was about to say that she had mentioned sexual reproduction before, but then I realized something. Was it possible that she knew the phrase "sexual reproduction", but not what it meant? *But I mean, it's sexual reproduction. You can't spell it without sex. How could she not know... wait, Auto Translator?!*

"Wait, Rokuko. Don't tell me..."

"Don't tell you what?" Rokuko tilted her head in confusion. I decided to keep

digging.

“...Do you know how babies are made?”

“Ah! O-Of course I do. Kissing, right? Kissing makes eggs and stuff.”

“Absolutely not.” I shot her down immediately. *Who fed her this garbage? Judging by the egg stuff, it must’ve been Redra. Does Redra even have kids?*

“Bwuh? Really? Mmm, okay. I guess I’ll ask Father how to make kids the next time I see him. I shouldn’t ask Haku, right?” *Your dad is literally a god. In Japan gods are born from like, taking off clothes, and washing in a bathtub too many times, that kind of thing. I don’t think he’ll be able to help you.*

...Wait. If Dungeon Cores are the children of a god, does that make them gods too? Given that they’re immortal, that might be true. Which means that Rokuko might actually get pregnant from a kiss... Maybe I should ask Haku how Cores have children? No, never mind, I’m scared to ask her. Like, asking the question itself is scary, but I’m more terrified of her saying something like “Cores get pregnant by eating their partner’s heart while it’s still beating.” I would have no way of knowing whether she’s lying or not.

“...Well, let’s put this aside for now.”

“Uh-huh. We can continue when we get back to town.” *I would rather we put it aside forever.*

“Let’s go back to Tsia once I get a little rest. Niku must be worried sick.”

“Oh, there’s some beds in the infirmary you can use.” Rokuko pointed at an infirmary, which had some beds just like the ones we saw in the Tsia inn all that time ago: hard-looking boxes with a few layers of sheets on them.

...Oh man. Whew. Just looking at a bed hit me with some intense sleepiness. I withdrew my beloved futon from {Storage} and rested it on top of a bed.

“Nmm.” Rokuko casually got in the futon. She acted so natural that I didn’t even think to stop her before it was too late. By the way, she was in teen/adult mode. She probably came here right after I got kidnapped, but still, she was hogging the whole one-person futon to herself.

“...I can’t get in that while you are.”

“Just think of me as a dakimakura, a good old hug pillow. Oh, or would you rather me be in my small form?”

“Don’t change size outside the dungeon, come on. Who knows when a soldier might walk in.”

“Okay then. Come in, Keima,” said Rokuko, holding the blanket to the futon up. *Last time she was small Rokuko with the Divine Futon, but this time she’s big Rokuko with a normal futon. I guess they balance out.*



“I mean, Ichika’s watching.”

“Bro, if you want me in there as a dakimakura too, I’m all game. Let’s make this happen.”

“Yeah, the futon’s definitely too small for your knockers, give it up.” Ichika gave a teasing smile broad enough to show her teeth. *Hahaha, this cow.*

“But this is the only futon you have, right Keima?”

It was true that I only had my personal futon in {Storage}. I had spent a ton of DP on all that weedkiller, and the plankton had actually used my last point of DP. Rokuko leaving the futon would solve everything, but it was obvious she had no intention of doing so.

“Now, Keima, give up and come inside the futon. Let’s sleep together.”

“Fine, fine.” I was so sleepy I decided to just listen to Rokuko. For some reason she was all like “Bwuh? Bwuh?!”, but she was the one who said she’d be my dakimakura. There was no reason for me not to hug her like I would a normal daki.

“K, K-K, Keima?”

“Night. I’m seriously tired, so... zzz...”

“Oh, okay. Goodnight, Keima... I guess you never went to sleep last night?”

“Yeah... zzz...” And so, I fell asleep. It was the kind of sleep one could only have when exhausted both mentally and physically.

* * *

Alright. I slept soundly until noon and was back at the top of my game. To be honest, I could have stood to sleep a little more, but I woke up with Rokuko staring directly at my face. It was kinda hard to fall back asleep with eyes right in front of mine. Anyway, we headed back to Tsia.

We entered Tsia from the east gate. Bonodore must have spread the word about us, as we weren’t charged for entry. Incidentally, the hole in the wall was fixed already. Someone must have told him about it too. *Thank goodness, I was*

worried that loose end wouldn't get tied up.

We went straight to the Archduke's residence and there we found Niku sitting by the gate. The second she saw me, she stood up and dashed toward me. She looked exactly like a loyal dog greeting its master. *Wait, that's not even a metaphor, it's just reality.* She clung to me.

"Master... I'm so glad you're safe..."

"Yep, I'm back." I patted Niku's head. She wagged her tail.

"I knew you would be safe, Keima! I believed in you!" Keima clung to me from behind too. *You've already said that. A lot.*

And so, I ended up stuck between them, completely immobile. *Get off me for a second, please.*

We greeted the guard and went inside. We were taken to the parlor. There we saw not only Bonodore, but Maiodore waiting as well.

"It is good to see you safe, Keima."

"Yep, I'm all good."

"Hugo. The Last Commune's number two. Forgive me, he escaped due to our own incompetence. It seems he went after you for revenge, but the fact you're here safely must mean you safely defeated him." *Oh, right. They don't know Hugo's goal was to live a long and peaceful life with me. Naturally, I guess. Time for me to play dumb.*

"I was pretty much prepared for the worst when he brought me to the dungeon. It was a close call."

"You'll have to forgive me for that too. To think he would defeat the soldiers I sent to the dungeon. According to the report I just received, he escaped even after being jumped on by five soldiers at once. He is quite the skilled warrior, despite being a criminal. If only he used his power for good."

"If he were an adventurer he'd hit B-Rank easily. With a bit of work, maybe even A-Rank."

Bonodore nodded. "Keima. You must remain on guard against Hugo, in the event that he returns. This is the result of my own failure. It won't make things

entirely right, but as an apology, I will see to it that you are not charged for entering or exiting Tsia. You may come and go as you like. We will have him dealt with as soon as possible.”

“Yes, thank you.” It seemed that Bonodore had taken quite the liking to me. Though maybe it was a bit late to say that, given how hard he had been trying to hook me up with his daughter.

“Keima.” Maiodore, his daughter, spoke up in a regretful tone of voice. “When you were kidnapped... I was worried sick, wondering what I would do if you never returned.”

“Well, I was your bodyguard, so whatever happened it’d be better than you being harmed.”

“Don’t be dumb. You being safe is way more important than her.” *Uh, Rokuko? Do you want to get executed? Huh? I mean, I wouldn’t be saying this if I hadn’t ended up safe, but still.*

“I agree that Keima escaping unharmed is ideal, Rokuko.”

“Good. I’m glad you understand.” For some reason, Rokuko was being pretty casual with the Archduke’s daughter. *When did these two become friends?*

“...May I have a moment, Keima?”

“Er, uh, sure, Bonodore.”

Bonodore gestured me over and so I leaned my ear toward him.

“It seems that Rokuko is, erm, of a very special status. What is her relationship with you, exactly?” *Did Rokuko say something about Haku?*

“...Before that, can I ask what Rokuko told you?”

“Ahhh, er, well. Actually, nothing. She told me nothing. Indeed, nary a word.” Bonodore backed off without hearing the answer to his question. He must have decided he was better off not knowing. *Yeah... I’m gonna have to ask Rokuko about this later. She definitely said something she shouldn’t have.*

“Oh, yes. Keima. About your engagement to Maiodore.” *Oh, I completely forgot about that.*

“...Ahhh, well, I’m not so sure about it.”

“I feel the same way, and after some thought, I settled on a compromise. What if Kuroinu were to marry her instead?” I didn’t even know how to reply. Rokuko, who had been listening beside me, tilted her head briefly, then nodded. “Well, as long as it isn’t Keima.”

“To be clear, Mai is a girl.”

“But Kuro’s a girl too,” I protested.

“I know. Indeed, I know. But two girls marrying each other is not unprecedented within the nobility,” explained Bonodore.

It seemed that noble families sometimes used children of the same gender as pawns in political marriages. Under normal circumstances, such marriages would end then and there with no children to stir discontent in the future, but this world had a loophole. There existed a series of magic drugs known as the Chaos Drugs, and among them was the “Futanaruu” potion. It had the effect of disturbing one’s gender. Those who drank the potion would become both a girl and a boy — also known as a futanari.

In short, if either one of them drank that potion, there would be no problem gender-wise with the marriage. Naturally, it was forbidden for commoners to make and consume the drug, but exceptions could be made with the permission of those in power.

“I acquired a Futanaruu potion by coincidence recently. I had set it aside, having no use for it, but perhaps now is the perfect opportunity.” Judging by the name of the potion and how he just recently got it, I could guess this was all Leona’s work. *Thank you so much, Leona. Always great to have you around.*

Incidentally, aside from the Futanaruu potion, there was also the “Maraha L,” “Saoki L,” and “Tee S” drugs for changing gender. “Tee S,” a drug that would change your gender, was no doubt a code for “transsexual.” *Yeah, this is definitely Leona fucking around. C’mon.*

“Uhhhh... I would like to know what they themselves have to say about this.” I glanced at Kuro.

“If it’s for your sake, Master... I will gladly do it.” *O-Oh man, she’s serious*

about this. I've never seen her eyes brimming with this much determination. Is this her trying to make up for me getting kidnapped? Don't worry, I don't think less of you! If you don't want to get married, you don't have to! Anyway... What about Maiodore?

"I do not mind either. Kuro is kind and strong, so much so it would be fair to call her the ideal partner. By marrying her I will secure a positive relationship with Goren and Tsia, so indeed, I have no issue with this." *Whaaaat... I mean, really? The archduke thinks Kuro and I are family, so this kinda makes sense, but everyone else thinks she's just a slave. And her name is still, well, her name.*

"...Uhhh, and which of them would drink the potion?"

"We can worry about that when the time comes. It takes approximately a year for the potion to take complete effect. Not to mention, we might think of a better plan before it comes to that." *Oh wait, I get it now. The archduke's just trying to buy time here. Alright, alright. Makes sense. I mean, Niku's a slave. No way would the archduke actually want his daughter to marry an actual slave. Okay, I'm game. I'll try and find a better way out for Niku and Maiodore before then in the meanwhile.*

"Alright then. I'll agree to Kuro being engaged to Mai... but on the condition that either of them can end the engagement if any problems occur."

"Yes, that's fair. It will be done." Bonodore and I exchanged a firm handshake. Negotiation complete. I wasn't sure what they were getting out of it, but personally, I had indirectly obtained access to the Divine Pillow. My one objective here was complete. Heck yeah.

"Incidentally, Keima. It seems that Maiodore has taken great inspiration from what you've told her."

"Huh? Uhhh... What might you be talking about?"

Bonodore grinned, likely hiding some sort of scheme.

* * *

And so, we finally returned to Goren. We got off the carriage. Naturally, not much had changed over the two weeks or so that we were gone.

“Welcome back, Master!” chanted the three Silky triplets in unison.

“Yep, I’m back.” Somehow, seeing them made me feel like I had been gone for a very, very long time.

“Yep... Goren Town, I’m home!”

“Oh, Keima, hold on.” Rokuko scooted in front of me, then turned around in front of the Silkies. “Okay. Say it again, Keima.”

“G-Goren Town, I’m home...?” It was a little embarrassing to repeat that line, but after I did, Rokuko gave a bright smile.

“Mhm. Welcome home, Keima.”

“...Yeah.” *Guess she wanted to welcome me back.*

“Yup yup, looks like Master and the wifey are all happy again. Isn’t that just great, Niku?”

“Yes. I’ll need to work hard as well.” Ichika gave a goofy grin and Niku clenched her fist with resolve.

“Kuro, I will study hard as well! You shall not be disappointed!” And finally, Maiodore’s drilled blue hair shook as she pumped her fist.

...Indeed. Maiodore (with an accompanying maid). After a discussion with Bonodore, it was decided that Maiodore should come to Goren as part of her studies. Apparently he wanted her close to me such that I could continue teaching her, and he would even send over a gold every month as payment. I said I didn’t really have much to teach her, but he was fine with her just living here in general, and in the end I just bent to his request because I didn’t have a good enough reason to refuse him.

No reason to turn down a stable source of income, at least. He would be sending the money in the form of a donation to the Beddhist church, so at the very least, I didn’t have to do anything to earn it.

Anyway, all that said, you could travel to Tsia and come back to Goren in a single day. She could come and go as she pleased. That meant he probably had some kind of secret goal to all this beyond just her studying here. *It’s possible he just wants Mai and Niku to get to know each other more... Eh. This is too*

much to think about.

“...Alright, time for bed. I’m gonna sleep the rest of the day away!” I was too tired to think. I was still exhausted from everything that had happened. I just wanted to go to bed and rest for a long while.

“I feel like you always want to sleep, Keima, but this time I can totally understand.”

“Yup, I’ve earned this. I worked way too hard this time. Thus, I sleep. Me, tired. Bed, happy.”

“Mmm, you’re starting to go crazy. Oyasuminasai, Keima.”

“Yep, oyasumi.”

Rokuko saw me off and I went to my room. Niku tagged along to be my dakimakura.

“Good work this time, Niku.”

“...Fwaah.” Niku wagged her tail happily as I patted her head.

“Wait, should you be leaving Maiodore behind?”

“It’s fine. She asked me to go.”

“Alright. Well... Uhhh, you kinda just ended up engaged to her, but listen. You can end the engagement whenever you want. Say something if you’re unhappy, alright? Don’t bottle it up inside, don’t sacrifice yourself for me. If you’re unhappy, just end the engagement.”

“Understood, Master.”

Things basically ended up with Niku sacrificing herself to compensate for me not marrying Mai. *I need to get my hands on the Divine Pillow and find a way to end this engagement as soon as possible.*

“...Anyway, time for bed.”

“Yes!”

That day, I slept extremely soundly with Niku as my dakimakura.

Epilogue 2

There was a grand ivory villa located within the Laverio Empire's capital city. Inside said villa was a garden and that was where Dungeon Core 89, also known as Haku Laverio, was spending her lazy evening. She sat on an ivory chair in front of an ivory table, both spotless despite their location outside. There was a butler serving black tea with a mithril tea set. The scene could be described as that of a dignified painting.

Haku took a sip from her cup of perfectly warm tea. A wonderful flavor spread through her mouth, befitting that of the Holy Kingdom's highest quality tea. That kingdom's Church of Lux was quite the thorn in her side, but they had an obsession with luxury goods that paid off.

...With her sip completed, Haku placed the cup back on the table, then looked at the cross-dressing beauty kneeling in front of her — Core 219.

"So? How did it go?"

"Ma'am! As you requested, Lady Haku, I lured Keima Goren into my dungeon! And then he escaped, brilliantly!"

Haku sighed. Core 219 always spoke in such an overdramatic tone that she felt like a player on the stage whenever she was near her. Though the fault ultimately laid with her. About two hundred years ago she had brought Core 219 to an imperial play, which struck such a deep chord with her that she ended up permanently influenced by a drive for drama.

"How was Keima, by the way? Did he fall for your charms, by chance?"

"Nay, my lady. Moreso than that, I felt LOVE! Between he and his male companion!"

Haku tilted her head.

"...His male companion? Wait just a moment. Keima and a man? Who is this man you refer to?"

“He is the man I exploited to kidnap Keima. However! He was in LOVE with Keima Goren! Subsequently, as they advanced through my dungeon together, Keima gradually opened his heart to him in turn...” Haku was so confused she tilted her head in the other direction.

“Core 219, do you recall the order I gave you?”

“Every word! Form a bond of friendship with Keima Goren, for as of yet unstated future purposes!”

“...Haaah. Then why did you kidnap him?”

“I thought it an opportunity to act out a dramatic meeting of romantic fate. There was a convenient tool lying around, so I had him bring Keima Goren to me. I attempted to have the man eliminated afterwards, but... they fought together and overcame all obstacles! They grew closer with every battle! Yes, indeed, there was love between them! Possibly.”

Haku decided to ignore all Core 219’s dramatic flair and focus on the facts. If simplified, Core 219 was saying that she used a passing male to kidnap Keima, and then they fell in love within her dungeon. That seemed ridiculous, but if true, would that not mean she had accomplished her initial goal of interfering with his relationship with Rokuko?

“Additionally, while contacting him I established a goal, and attempted to befriend him through means of working together toward that goal. However, this failed. The goal itself was impossible, but I assigned Keima Goren a task so simple anyone should have been able to complete it. Strange.”

“What goal?”

“That is... Rebellion against you, my lady! A goal so impossible by nature that centuries of work would bring me no closer to success! I asked him to serve as a hostage so that I might threaten you with his life.” *Keima would obviously never agree to help with that*, thought Haku. But something seemed off to her.

“It feels as if you are hiding something from me.”

“Indeed! You are absolutely correct. I am stunned, yet not surprised, by your keen senses, my lady! But tragically, due to a {Trinity} contract with Keima Goren, I cannot report everything to you! Please forgive me, my lady.” Core 219

respectfully bowed her head.

Due to her constant dramatic acting, it was hard to tell to what degree she was being sincere. Haku had shown her that play to culture her a little, but it had brought her nothing but trouble. To this day she regretted showing Core 219 that play.

“...Very well. You may leave.”

“Understood!”

In any case, Keima and Core 219 making a contract with each other meant they had at least gotten close to some degree. That was close enough to a success for now. Her one worry was that every time Core 219 spoke the name Keima Goren, there was a familiar... gentle look in her eyes. She knew the look well, but she couldn't quite remember what it indicated.

“Incidentally, my lady. I would like to turn this event into a play. May I have your permission to do so?”

“...You may, but as always, do not forget to remove Dungeon Core details and change proper nouns.” Despite thinking that the play might end up unpopular due to the male romance (?), Haku gave her permission since Core 219's scripts were sincerely popular and, if performed by pretty enough actors, everything would probably be fine.

“Indeed, of course! Now, farewell! May we meet again!” With a flutter of her mantle, Core 219 {Teleported} back to her dungeon. With her departure, Chloe silently poured a fresh glass of tea for Haku.

“.....” Haku took another sip and collected her thoughts on Core 219. She had aimed to make contact with Keima through a dramatic first meeting. Judging by her report, she had accomplished this goal of hers quite effectively.

“Did she exploit my orders to start something of her own...? Hm, I wonder what she might be planning.” In any case, the rebellion was likely more sincere than it first appeared. There was no doubt she intended to rebel if the right opportunity arose. No doubt at all.

...Core 219 of Tsia, located right beside Goren Town and Rokuko. Perhaps it would have been better to let them remain independent without ever

engineering a meeting. Haku made a mental note to pay close attention to future developments between them.

Incidentally, the play Core 219 penned — titled “The Man and the Beast” — was a hit throughout the imperial capital.

Extra Episode: Maiodore's First Love

While Keima was gathering information on the Last Commune, Bonodore was being pestered by his daughter Maiodore to talk about him.

"Father, Father! What kind of person is Keima?"

"Keima of Goren Town, hm. I believe he is a noble, but for some reason he is hiding that."

"There is no mistaking that he's the Keima Goren from the noble almanac, correct?" The fact that she could casually list off names from the noble almanac showed that Maiodore was taking her daily studies as the daughter of a noble family seriously. Bonodore grinned.

"Indeed. I imagine there is more to him than meets the eye. You saw the color of his hair and eyes. He is likely descended from a Hero."

"I see... Ah, that means Kuro is, u-um, N-Niku Kuroinu, right?" Maiodore spoke her name with shy embarrassment. Naturally, she knew what the name Niku meant. Nobles had to learn about all facets of the world, pretty and ugly. Women in particular were expected to have a sharp, biting wit when it came to communicating. So much so that there were tutors dedicated to teaching women how to properly insult and offend others through euphemisms and other means. At a bare minimum, nobles needed to have the knowledge necessary to know when they were being insulted by others. Undetected malice was worse than bared malice.

However, understanding a word and being able to say it were two different things. Maiodore was still a pure little girl. At the moment she had only been taught enough to help her avoid accidentally saying dirty words.

"She is fine being called Kuro, you do not have to say her first name."

"Y-Yes, forgive my inexperience." Maiodore would be largely unaffected by this manner of conversation once she grew older, but naturally, it was a bit much to ask a ten year old girl to say dirty words without flinching. To

Maiodore, saying “Niku” was equivalent to saying “Fuck, piss, dick, and balls” all at once. One could hardly blame her for blushing.

“It’s quite alright. You are still young enough to be accepted as a child... ah, but I suppose I will be proposing an engagement to you soon.”

“...Yes.” Maiodore nodded. She had been prepared for an engagement the moment her father had her meet Keima. Which was exactly why she was asking about him now.

Maiodore might have guessed Keima’s tastes the moment she learned that his small companion was a niku. But if anything, he should be praised for preparing an outlet for his lusts. Though it was hard to judge whether his openness with her was a positive thing or not. Since he was so open that Maiodore didn’t even realize it until she asked her father, perhaps it was indeed a good thing.

Bonodore, thinking that Maiodore’s impression of Keima was riddled with negativity, decided to tell her at least one positive thing.

“Keep what I’m about to say to yourself. Keima is so skilled that the Ivory Goddess herself gives him her backing.”

“H-He is that skilled?!” Maiodore was surprised, but also quick to understand. The blood of the Tsia archduke’s family was not so cheap that a mere town chief and minor noble would be worthy of it. However, one backed by the Ivory Goddess Haku was another story. Adventurer noble or not, he would be in practice a higher rank than your average duke.

“It is safe to assume he has connections to her somewhere.”

“...Connections to the Ivory Goddess...” Maiodore swallowed hard. Few people in the entire empire could boast connections that valuable. She would be a pawn to bring those connections to her family. As the daughter of nobility, this was the most important role of her life.

“Though as of yet, I have not mentioned the marriage to him.”

“Is that so? I would have thought the engagement would be on paper by now.”

“I just thought I should test him first. Hence the quest. I would never give my Mai to someone without making sure they’re worth you first.”

“I see. It is true that from my first meeting with him, he seems to have received an upbringing far above what an upstart adventurer would have.”

“Indeed. I was worried about the same thing myself. It should be safe to assume that Keima received training fit for a noble. I naturally don’t know when or where this happened, but... well, given that he has the Ivory Goddess’s backing, he likely isn’t a spy from a foreign kingdom. Though he might be a spy from another region in the empire.” In any case, once Keima was deemed a safe pick, Bonodore would acquire his connections through means of Maiodore.

“He seemed to have a pleasant personality.”

“His skill is no joke, either. He shook off the spies I sent after him with little effort, it seems.”

“What else do we know about him?”

“Hm.” Bonodore knew much about his status as a pope, for instance, but elected not to tell Maiodore much so as to avoid giving her prejudice. It’s often impossible to forget something once you’re told it, but in contrast, it’s very simple to teach someone something new. With that in mind, it was better to keep your cards in hand and be very careful about teaching others things.

“Well, do not worry too much. Just consider him a skilled adventurer and approach him with that in mind.”

“Understood. I cannot wait to see Keima again!”

Suddenly, the city bell rang, informing everyone of the time.

“Thank you for the chat, Father. I must be going to see my math tutor now.”

“Yes, do your best. Math will certainly be useful in your future, no matter what you might end up doing.”

“Until next time.” Maiodore bowed her head and left Bonodore’s office. Incidentally, she was learning about multiplication that day.

* * *

Eventually, Keima returned, having achieved better results than anyone had ever imagined.

Maiodore knocked on the parlor door, where Keima was waiting. Delicately, holding back her urge to fling the door open. She must act the part of a noble daughter.

“Oh, excuse me. It seems Mai is here. I called for her after being informed that you had arrived. Come on in, Mai.”

“Thank you. Hello, Keima.” In truth, she wanted to fling the door open and dash inside, showering him with praise. *Wow, you’re amazing! Just amazing!* Maiodore’s heart was filled with the excited glee of a kid meeting a superhero. But doing so would look disgraceful, so she acted like a calm lady instead of a normal child.

“It’s good to see you again.”

“Yes, it’s been one week since we last met, Maidore.” Keima replied as if he was speaking to a *woman* and not a *girl*, which made Maiadore’s heart flutter more. His taste for little girls might not be so bad after all, if he would treat her like an adult lady.

Apparently, they had been talking about his potential engagement to Maiodore. But surprisingly enough, Keima wasn’t enthusiastic about marrying Maiodore. It was true that for a normal man, Maiodore would be lacking in a variety of ways. It would be years before she grew enough to not be lacking in those areas. They had thought that Keima with his tastes would jump at the chance to marry her before that happened, but he wasn’t. Something was wrong.

That said, with the archduke himself pushing the issue, it was an offer that Keima could not refuse. A simple town chief would have to be prepared for financial and political ruin before he could oppose the archduke of an entire region.

Keima’s loli attendant, Niku, interrupted the conversation with a raised hand. “He is rejecting the marriage in its entirety.”

A chill ran down Maiodore’s spine. To think that he would refuse so bluntly.

And through his attendant, for some reason.

“...Keima? Is she speaking for you here?” Bonodore glared at Keima with a mana-packed gaze. But Keima seemed unfazed, as did Niku.

“Yes, she said what’s on my mind. I don’t intend to marry your daughter,” said Keima, which made Bonodore break out into a grin.

“I like you! Very well, I will honor your position on the matter.” The atmosphere flipped right around. His mana pressure had been deftly avoided. Maiodore truly believed that by standing firm in the face of her father’s mana pressure, Keima had proven himself to be an extraordinary man.

But at this rate, they would be unable to form a connection with Keima, and therefore, with the Ivory Goddess. Maiodore immediately suggested that he be a marriage candidate instead. Bonodore jumped at the idea.

“I would like to get to know you better, Keima. I would like to hear stories of your adventures ever so much. Please, oh please!” She knew it was a vile act of manipulation, but Maiodore exploited Keima’s respect for her. When he began to reply, she followed up with more enthusiasm. Though to be fair, she did indeed want to hear his adventurer stories.

The discussion settled with him serving as her bodyguard for three days, as discussed prior. She would need to acquire his love before the three days were up. Maiodore clenched her fist with determination. But then, Keima revealed something that changed everything.

They had thought that Niku Kuroinu was his sex slave. But Keima made it clear that she was family. That shot up Niku’s importance immensely. They were related, and they shared the same black hair and eyes. It was clear they were of the same bloodline. There was no telling why their parents had named her Niku, but Keima himself said he had not given her the name himself.

Naturally, Bonodore apologized immediately. Maiodore also felt her attitude toward Niku change.

(Wait. Does this mean...?) At the same time, she realized that Keima had been treating her as a woman regardless of any fetish or sexual perversion. The one concern she had regarding him was all a misunderstanding on her part. Which

meant all she had left was positivity for him. Mai, realizing she had the chance to marry Keima, realizing there was a potential engagement between them, felt her heart thump with excitement.

Afterwards, Maiodore, Keima, and Niku had a tea party. She was nervous throughout, but she believed she showed them an entertaining time. She wasn't sure about it because before she knew it, she had ended up enraptured in Keima's stories.

Although Keima's status as a pope surprised her, the Beddhist Church had a reasonable doctrine, and allowed the worship of other gods. He knew many tales of adventure that made one question just how broad his personal connections were. Niku, too, was so adorable that Maiodore couldn't help but smile.

In the end, Keima moved away from the table and used a cushion as a pillow while laying down. He said that he would show me how those of the Beddhist faith pray, but...

"...It seems to me that he is just sleeping."

"That's right, he is." Niku confirmed Maiodore's suspicions.

"Wait, he really is just sleeping?"

"Sleeping is a form of prayer in Beddhism."

Maiodore got the urge to poke Keima's defenseless cheek as he slept.

"Praying in Beddhism certainly is simple, then."

"...Do you really think that?" asked Niku, making Maiodore tilt her head.

What could be hard about just sleeping? Niku answered her unspoken question. "Mai, do you think could sleep like this, in front of other people?"

"...Ah!" Now that she mentioned it, that was exactly right. Sleeping itself was simple enough. But only when nobody else was around you. Mai could manage to sleep with a trusted maid nearby, but a man who she might be marrying one day? It would be difficult for men and women to sleep near each other without having enormous trust in one another. Which showed just how much Keima trusted her.

“That said, you can pray inside your home if you want, so it really is simple. It’s just hard when you do it outside.”

“I suppose I should expect nothing less from the pope of Beddhism.”

Niku nodded.

“And my, what peaceful expression he has... It’s like I can feel how happy he is just by looking at him.”

“Yes. I really, really like looking at Master when he’s asleep.” Niku’s expression rarely changed, but Maiodore felt that she could sense her happiness through her blank look.

(...She truly is cute...!) Maiodore looked at Niku again. She had glossy hair that was short but well taken care of. She was far from bony, showing that she was well fed. Her brown skin was smooth and looked pleasant to the touch. Her clothes were high quality enough to show how well Keima took care of her. And finally...

“Oh? What might that pendant be? It doesn’t seem to be one of the Beddhist Church’s holy symbols.”

“This? It’s a clock.” A clock small enough to hang from her neck. Maiodore took a closer look and saw that it was a magic tool with a needle that ticked every second or so. That would certainly allow her to tell the time better than someone relying on bells. Keima giving her such a valuable item was yet more proof of how precious she was to him.

It was then that Maiodore noticed how intently and lovingly Niku was staring at Keima’s face.

“...I will never get tired of looking at Keima’s face.”

“...You know, I think we can agree on that.”

And so, Niku and Maiodore watched Keima sleep for some time... until he eventually woke up.

* * *

Keima ate supper with them. The meal was bread and soup, like normal. It was bread and soup fancy enough to leave an average adventurer stunned, but

Keima was unimpressed.

Not to mention that it was a meal with Rondo, the next archduke, Jive, his second son, and Waltz, the archduke's wife. It was a meal with the archduke's whole family, but Keima was unfazed.

After the meal, everyone (excluding Jive) gathered in Bonodore's office. Normally Maiodore wouldn't be called, as she was even younger than Jive, but the discussion was related to her potential future husband.

"He seemed like a solid man to me. What did you all think?"

"He is very calm and composed. I can imagine that he has dined with the Ivory Goddess before. Don't you agree, dear?"

"Despite being a mere visad, it is impossible to look down on him. He has the spirit and guts of a leader. I don't know if he was born with the talent, or if he was trained to be this way, but I would have no problem entrusting an army to him."

"He's wonderful. Also, Kuro is cute."

Everyone gave their impressions of Keima. Thankfully, all were positive.

"I was planning on forming connections with Keima. It seems that everyone here will agree that is a good idea."

"I'll do my best! I think I will be able to make a wonderful family with Keima." Maiodore clenched her fist, determined.

"I was a bit worried about the age gap, but if Mai wishes for this, I will support her with all the strength I have as her mother."

"Agreed. He is the man who destroyed the Last Commune single-handedly. I can imagine nothing more heartening than him supporting my future rule over Tsia with Mai as his wife. Either way, I would not want to make an enemy out of him. As your brother, Mai, I fully support your marriage to him."

Waltz and Rondo both gave Mai their support. They had both fully approved of Keima.

"About that. Sorry for mentioning this so late, but... Keima seems disinterested in marrying Mai. We need to think of a plan that doesn't involve

marriage.”

“...Is he unsatisfied with her age? Judging by his companion, I thought that would not be an issue.”

“Watch yourself, Waltz. It seems that Keima is Kuroinu’s father.”

“Ah! I see, erm... Forgive my indiscretion. “ Waltz apologized for hitting Keima with unjust complaints. Her apology was better suited for Keima and Niku, but it was a misspoken statement in a secret meeting. She had no choice but to bottle up her regret and live with it.

Maiodore was surprised to learn that Keima and Niku were father and daughter. If she married Keima, she would end up with a daughter the same age as her. They would have no problems being friends, but should she ask Niku to call her “mom”?

“It’s not your fault. I too was deceived by her name.”

“...He foiled our spies and has a mysterious past. Could it be that Keima himself is a spy?”

“No, Keima is a town chief and the pope of Beddhism. He stands out too much to be a spy. We can mark off that idea in its entirety. There is one possibility I’ve considered, but... It too is unthinkable.”

“What possibility, Father?” asked Rondo, replying to his father’s murmur.

“Well. It might be possible that Keima isn’t descended from a Hero, but is a Hero himself. However, all Heroes in the empire are given an S-Rank immediately.” There were no exceptions, not even for Heroes summoned without official permission like Wataru Nishimi, or Heroes from another country like Dragon Suzuki.

“With the Ivory Goddess involved, there is little chance he would be left as a B-Rank adventurer.”

“A solid point. Otherwise, this would be subterfuge performed by the Ivory Goddess herself.” That would be far too risky to do for the sake of a single individual.

“The only option is that he is descended from a Hero and was trained in

secret.”

“That would explain many things.” Waltz and Rondo nodded.

Maiodore’s mind raced at thoughts of what kind of secret village Keima was raised in. Maiodore wasn’t curious about Keima’s true identity. She found him more than attractive enough as he was already.

“But if Kuroinu is Keima’s daughter, does that not mean he already has a wife?”

“The noble almanac listed him as single. Perhaps he has a secret wife?”

“Judging by the fact that their party member Ichika Kuroinu shares her last name, I would guess she is the mother?”

“...No. I saw Ichika during a Beddhist mass and she was a human. With Kuroinu’s hair and skin color in mind, the possibility is even less likely. It’s more likely that they just share the same name, maybe due to—”

“How old is he, anyway? He seems to be—”

Maiodore’s eyes were beginning to get heavy.

“Woah there. You can go to your room if you’re tired, Mai.”

“Fwaah, n-no, I’m still... Let’s keep... nmmm...”

Bonodore, seeing that Maiodore was beginning to rub her eyes, called an end to the family meeting.

* * *

The next day, Maiodore left the mansion with Keima and Niku as guards early in the morning. They were bodyguards in name only, and the event was, to be realistic, just a date. The city was safer than ever thanks to the Last Commune’s destruction, she likely didn’t even need a bodyguard at all.

“Let us leave at once, Keima!”

“Sure. Where’s this orphanage, then?”

“This way!” said Maiodore, taking the lead. She was getting so excited that Niku held out her hand to get her under control. It was a bit childish for friends to walk holding each other’s hands, but after Keima told her he had to keep his

hands free to do his job, Mai obediently took Niku's hand despite her embarrassment.

Her hand was smooth and so soft it almost felt like she had never held a blade before. But Keima had said she was the strongest fighter in their party.

"...Squish squish."

"That tickles, Mai."

"Are you really a fighter, Kuro? I heard that fighting hardens one's hands."

"...This is just how my body is. I don't get blisters from swinging swords. But it makes the pain go away too, so it's okay." That explanation seemed odd to Maiodore, but she accepted it— for the moment anyway.

They offered their prayers at the church before going to the orphanage. Keima offered a serious prayer suitable for a holy man such as himself, while Niku gave a comfortable prayer much like a nun would.

"That was quite the passionate prayer, Keima. What did you pray for?"

"Uhhh, world peace." Keima spoke of an enormous, admirable dream like it was nothing. Most prayed for themselves, but one holy enough to be a pope began to pray for the world, it seemed.

"And you, Kuro?"

"I prayed for health." Maiodore sighed in relief. That was much more normal. However, Niku continued. "So that I can be with him for even a little bit longer." She remained expressionless, but there was a simple warmth on her blank face that made Maiodore embarrassed for being so selfish when it came to Keima.

"Kuro... Er, well. Yeah. Let's both live for a long time."

"Yes." Niku nodded as Keima patted her head.

"...So splendid." Somehow, Maiodore felt close to tears. She was extremely moved to the point of not entirely understanding why.

They could hear the cries of children playing once they entered the orphanage area. Their voices were loud and excited. The kids all rushed toward Mai, who was really only slightly older than them. She was healed by their innocent

childlike smiles, lacking any of the insincerity that noble smiles tended to have. Maiodore was a child herself, but that wasn't on her mind at the moment.

"Who's this guy, Mai... um, Lady Mai?"

"Oh, well."

"I'm an adventurer working as Mai's bodyguard. Same goes for this other little girl." Keima introduced himself before Maiodore could.

He had no problem dealing with the kids calmly even after they insulted him by calling him weak. Maiodore, however, was frustrated. Keima and Niku were strong enough to have destroyed an entire criminal organization by themselves. In the end, though, her frustration faded as Keima talked to the kids. It would be silly for her to get mad on his behalf when he himself wasn't upset.

Maiodore played with the kids while Keima watched from the shade. The kids were fast and hard to catch during minotag. She looked to Niku for help and saw that a kid was challenging her to a duel.

Niku put him on his back in no time. She did so to such a natural and deft extent it was enrapturing. It felt as if she was saying minotag was mere child's play, and that real adventurers were as strong as her. Despite being the same as her, and a girl like her, she was so much stronger than Maiodore. What training led to her being so fast, so strong?

Niku was soon surrounded by kids wanting to be adventurers, yelling their praises at her and begging to be taught. Keima watched it all with a smile. Maiodore also felt proud of Niku's success, somehow.

...Perhaps this is what it feels like to be a parent, thought Mai while taking Niku's place in the shade. She began talking to Keima about Tsia Dungeon as a form of small talk, but then realized something. Keima no doubt already knew everything about the nearby dungeon. He was just feigning ignorance to keep the conversation going.

"There's actually a lot I don't know. I really appreciate you telling me about that dungeon, Mai."

"...T-Truly?" Even so, Maiodore was forced to accept something. Keima was an adult, and she was just a child. Perhaps even this orphanage might appear

like a simple pastime to Keima, which made Maiodore nervous enough that she asked about it.

“...Um, Keima. I am providing financial support to this orphanage myself. What do you think about it? Does it seem like I am merely funding it for propaganda reasons?”

“Are you doing it for propaganda reasons?”

“No! I wouldn’t dream of exploiting children for that purpose. But some accuse me of such.”

“Then why worry? Listen to what other people say, consider their ideas, and leave it at that. If they’re wrong, that’s that.” Keima effortlessly blew away Maiodore’s worries.

“Kids not starving is a pretty good thing. See? You’re fine.” He even approved of her. An adult like Keima giving her his approval made Maiodore feel happy.

She continued the discussion and Keima listed off fruitful ideas that never would have occurred to Maiodore. She could turn the orphanage into a school for raising workers. If the orphans worked as merchants, the orphanage could survive on its own without her support.

“But if your goal here is just to make yourself look good, or to give the orphans more time to play, then just handing over money like you have been is fine too.” Still, Keima suggested that his ideas weren’t her only options.

“You should do what you think is best.”

“...Yes, you’re right.” Indeed, Keima was an adult, and she was not. Maiodore could deny it no longer. Meanwhile, Niku had gotten exhausted from playing with the other kids.

The date ended midway through not long after that. Keima spotted suspicious people following them and ended things early.

“...Kuro, I had no idea you were so strong.” Where was all the strength hiding within her cute girlish exterior? Even Rondo would need a rest after running through the whole city to the mansion. Princess carries seemed elegant, but

they required significant muscles to maintain over a long period of time. Though that was exactly why girls admired them.

“Mai, how was your date?” asked Bonodore, making Maiodore blush and answer while staring into the distance.

“...Keima is a truly splendid adult. He gave me very valuable advice regarding the operation of the orphanage.”

“Oh?”

Maiodore told her father Keima’s ideas and thoughts. Bonodore even gave her his own thoughts, that the cost-performance was already high enough that she didn’t need to change things if she didn’t want to.

“So, what do you want to do, Maiodore?”

“...Well, um. I want to make the children happy, if I can. So I would like to try teaching them to be merchants. I want to try.”

“That’s fine. I will continue budgeting as much money for the donations as I have been, and you may do with the money as you like.” Bonodore gave permission on a dime as Maiodore fidgeted nervously.

“You don’t mind, Father?”

“Not at all. In fact... If you would like to continue learning from Keima, I might even think it acceptable for you to go to Goren Town to study.” Worst case scenario, they could secure a connection with Keima through having him be Maiodore’s teacher. Maiodore hugged her father tight, impressed as always by his tenacity and political skill.

* * *

A day passed. Maiodore learned why Keima had been so firm about not marrying her.

“I’m Keima’s partner, Rokuko. Can I call you Mai?” Beside Keima stood a confident looking girl named Rokuko.

When Maiodore stirred conflict between them, Keima clearly prioritized Rokuko over her. Niku consoled her as she wept over each defeat. She really was cute. And kind. Maiodore would expect nothing less from Keima’s child.

“Grrr, who is this Rokuko, really...!”

“Hm? Rokuko is Master’s partner,” said Niku like it was the most natural thing in the world.

Maiodore glared at her angrily.

“But Keima is my... my marriage candidate...!”

“Rokuko is his partner.”

“...What does partner mean? Are they married?”

“.....” Niku averted her eyes, clearly avoiding the question. It would probably be wise to assume that they were married or something close to it.

“In the end, he never gave me the ring... Haaah.” As Maiodore sighed, depressed, Niku held out the ring Keima had given her.

“...I think this would look better on you.”

“Ah! Kuro...!” Maiodore took the ring with a greenish blue gem resembling turquoise on it.

“You’re very kind, Kuro.”

“...Master said to be friendly with you, so...?”

“In short, we are friends.”

“I see, I guess we are friends, then.” Niku nodded. Maiodore returned her nod with a smile.

“Haaah. You know, I might not mind it if I were ultimately engaged to you, Kuro.”

Niku tilted her head. “You would want to marry me?”

“Hm? Yes. I mean, Keima already has Rokuko, it seems. It’s normal for noble children to engage in political marriages, so I naturally would prefer to at least marry someone I’m on good terms with.”

“Oh, okay.” Niku fell into thought. Suddenly she remembered that Keima’s ultimate goal was Mai’s Divine Pillow. Marriage with Maiodore would likely be the key to acquiring it. And he had just told her to be friends with Mai. “...Ah!”

It struck her like lightning. Niku took Maiodore's hand and looked her in the eyes. "Maiodore. Please marry me."

"Wha?!" The sudden request made Maiodore's eyes open wide. Niku looked deadly serious. On Mai's finger was the ring Niku had just given her. The proposal made Maiodore so happy that she was subconsciously flapping her wings.

B-But I already have a tentative engagement to Keima! No, but Keima has a partner, Rokuko! No no no no, but Kuro and I are both girls! Ah, b-but, she's kind, and I can rely on her, and she's kind! Ah, wait, I remember my tutor telling me that even girls can marry in the empire! Right! As Maiodore's mind went into a panic, Keima was kidnapped, and before she knew it, her marriage with Niku was all but set in stone. It was possible that Keima had offhandedly mentioned the idea and Bonodore just picked it up.

"...Ah, um, well... I look forward to spending time with you, Kuro. I think we will be able to work together to support Keima together."

"I think so too, Maiodore." Niku nodded.

"...Can I ask something?" said Kuro, her head tilting. Maiodore was reminded of how cute she was.

"Certainly."

"What should an engaged couple do together?"

"...Oh? Um, well, I suppose we should be on more friendly terms with each other. You can, um, call me... Mai?"

"...Okay, Mai."

Maiodore felt as if they had misunderstood each other somehow, but her worries were drowned out by the fast beating of her heart after Kuro called her Mai.

Extra Episode: The Lazy Dungeon Master's Gifted, Talented Subordinates

Keima sent a letter saying that he wouldn't be returning for some time, due to accepting the archduke's quest. The letter sent a stir throughout all those involved with the [Cave of Greed]. An emergency meeting was immediately held among hotel staff.

"Master is absent. This is an unprecedented situation," said Rei solemnly, as the chairwoman of the meeting.

"Indeed. Even when he went to the imperial capital for the last Dungeon Battle, he still returned to the dungeon daily." Kinue, the de facto manager of the inn, provided historical context.

"The inn and church are both larger than they were beforeee, but now he might be gone for a whole moooonth..." Neruneh, head of research, stated the problem clearly.

"...I see. It is quite worrying for the town chief to be absent for so long, now that I think about it." Suilla, leader of the Succubi, nodded absentmindedly. Rei knew that as she was a newcomer among them, she didn't understand the full gravity of the situation. "So, what problems specifically will occur without the town chief around?"

"I..." Rei fell silent at Suilla's question. "....."

".....E-Er, Rei?"

"W-Without Master here, um, Master isn't here!" One could hardly blame Suilla for being unimpressed. But she soon understood the difference in their positions.

"You were all born from this dungeon. Perhaps there will be a mana related problem if your Dungeon Master is absent?"

"Thaaat's, probably not the caaaase." Neruneh immediately answered Suilla's

question.

“Perhaps an issue with your lives in general, then...?”

“I don’t believe so.” Kinue shot the idea down immediately.

“Will there be any issues with your work, then? Luckily, we of the church can continue our operations just fine even without the pope; that is, the town chief.”

“...The dungeon is fine without Master.”

“The inn is fine too.”

“There’s a mountain of research that I have to do alreaaady, so him being gooone, is kinda gooood? Since he won’t give me mooooore?”

The answers she was getting confused Suilla to no end.

“It seems to me that there is no problem whatsoever with the town chief being absent. Am I wrong?”

“...Um. Will there be any problems with the Silky triplets or Michiru? The little ones?” Rei broadened the meeting to cover those who weren’t present.

“Michiru is more sad about Kuro being absent than the town chief, I believe. She will be fine.”

“The Silkies will be fine as long as they have the inn to clean.”

But there were no problems there either.

“...Ah! He isn’t just the Dungeon Master, he’s the Town Chief. He has work to do as the chief! How will it get done?!”

“Calm down, Rei. His current excursion is the most important job he’s ever had as town chief. With vice chief Wozma staying behind, the town will continue operating just fine.” Again, no problems.

“...Um. Could it be that Master’s absence will not cause any problems at all?”

“As far as I can tell, that seems to be the case,” answered Kinue in Rei’s stead, the latter having fallen deep into troubled thought. The meeting had been called with utter certainty that disaster had struck, but all for naught.

“Oh, what’re you all doing here?” said Rokuko as she entered the room.

“Ah, um, Rokuko...” Rei told Rokuko about the meeting’s goal and their discussion so far.

“Why didn’t you call me for this?”

“I-I called all those who I could with my authority.”

“I get it. I’m too high up for you to summon over. But thanks to that, you held a pointless meeting.” Rei shrunk down weakly at Rokuko just flat out calling her meeting pointless. “Listen, Rei. Do you think Keima would ever just leave the dungeon for weeks without planning ahead first?”

“Ah...!” The truth came raining down on Rei like an avalanche. If Keima was the excellent Master that Rei considered him to be, it was only natural that he would plan ahead. Keima was a skilled enough master that of course he would design his dungeon such that it could operate without him for days, weeks, or even months. Rei finally realized that was exactly why he always entrusted his work to others, why he delegated, why he trained everyone to be independent. Though generally she knew he just abandoned his work so he could sleep.

“So basically, you don’t need to worry. And I mean, I’m still here. Are you saying you can’t trust me to run my own dungeon?”

“N-No, not at all! I would never think that, Rokuko!”

“Indeed. After all, we just determined that there are no problems right now.”

“That’s our Master for yooooou.”

“Indeed, the town chief is certainly an intelligent fellow.”

“Okay. Then we’re done here. Go back to your jobs, everyone.” Rokuko started shooing them away, so the gathered individuals all obediently stood up and returned to their workplaces.

“Dude, why the heck didn’t they call me?” Ichika popped out from seemingly nowhere.

“I mean, you were here before all of them, and you’re kind of like their teacher.”

“You gotta tell them to get me in on the next meeting, cause like, ouch. Feels pretty bad to be left out, not gonna lie!”

“I know the feeling. We’re all on the same team here, too. Like, Suilla? What? Why’d they call her but not us? That’s just messed up.”

Ichika and Rokuko gave each other a firm handshake for some reason.

Afterword

I dream of a world where I am surrounded by cute little Silkies, but in reality I am here, writing this. It's me, Supana.

This is Volume 7, huh? I just finished breaking my back writing all this, and now it's time to write more. But that's fine. Getting to write an afterword means the books are still coming out, and that's thanks to all of you readers. I may be breaking my back, but it's a labor of love. All I can say is, thank you very much for reading *Lazy Dungeon Master*.

Anyway, this is the lucky Volume 7. My goal is to get up to Volume 695, but... Yeah. Probably not happening. For now I'll stick to aiming for double digits.

Okay, time for business secrets. I'll start with the ones that aren't spoilers.

I turned about one chapter's worth of content from the web novel version into this volume, with a usual volume containing three chapters' worth of content. When I was writing the fifth volume I realized that if my upload pace dropped, the light novels would catch up to the web novel in no time. To compensate for this I started writing arcs in the web novel with the understanding that I would be adding to them significantly for the light novel. Thus, this volume is ninety-percent original. That's why the page count is lower this time. Sorry, doing two jobs at once is pretty rough.

...I mean, it might be better if I just wrote each volume from scratch, but I value the fans of the web novel. I don't want to completely cut them off. So, I'll keep updating the web novel until the series is done, even if the arcs are cut down in comparison to this light novel adaptation.

And unfortunately, I once again missed the opportunity to get Ichika on the cover. I thought Volume 7 would be the one for sure, but she just didn't show up too much this time. If you want to know who the cutie on the cover is, well, I encourage you to read the book and find out. Let's just say that they're very much a "dungeon trap," if you catch my drift.

Okay, there will be some spoilers from here on out.

This volume was mostly about Tsia, and a lot of things happened here that didn't in the web novel. That's to be expected, since this is ninety percent original, but said things sure entered a wild lawless territory where gender and age got all mixed up. To be honest, in retrospect I can't deny the feeling that I went too far, but let's blame this on the God of Chaos. "Do as you like, whatever the cost," she whispers so seductively into my ear. And I mean, Chapter 3 was basically entirely new characters more or less. I really might have gone too far here. Oh well, I'm writing the afterword now. What's done is done.

Oh whoops, I'm almost out of pages. Guess I should bring this to a close. Thanks for picking up another volume of *Lazy Dungeon Master*, and may we meet again in the next volume.

...Well, there's four lines left, but hey. No harm in being lazy sometimes.

Supana Onikage

Bonus Short Stories

The Pink Side Job of Beddhist Nuns

On that fateful day, Keima brought work to the Beddhist Church.

“A side job, you say?”

“Yeah, ’cause the church suddenly got a lot more nuns. There must not be enough work to go around, yeah? If anyone’s bored and looking for something to do, they can kill some time with this side job.” The side job was to make products that would be sold to the Dyne Company. The Succubus nuns were excited to hear that, since that meant they would be paid.

“So yeah, here’s the materials for cushions and instructions for making them.” Keima conjured a new futon out of nowhere. He could buy the cushions with DP, just like he bought the futons, but they were way more expensive. They could save a lot of money by dismantling futons and reusing the materials.

“Also, apparently wooden sculptures are a staple here. Something about kids playing with them or something. I’ll leave the materials here, carve whatever you like.” Keima could have used his {Create Golem} to make the sculptures in a matter of seconds, but the sculptures were a staple for pretty much everyone to make. By leaving the materials in the church, Keima was hoping that adventurers might join in on the fun, spending their time doing things other than drinking and gambling.

“Very well, we accept.”

If nothing came of all this, well, no big deal. Keima wasn’t worried about it.

And so, the Succubus nuns with Suilla at their head immediately got to work making the cushions and sculptures. All four of them gathered, excluding Michiru the loli Succubus.

“Lady Suilla, this futon is new, isn’t it? Can I switch it out with my futon?”

“I suppose, since we’re going to be taking it apart anyway. Our futons are new as well, but changing mattresses after just a month is delightfully decadent in its own way. Let’s all swap our futons.”

“Yay!” said the Succubus before rushing off to get the futons.

“As for the wooden sculptures... I wonder what we should make.”

“I believe he said to carve whatever we like. So, what do we like...” Perhaps this story would have been different if they were normal nuns or village girls. But unfortunately, they were all Succubi. There was only one possible thing that they would make.

Once they finished satisfactory prototypes, they went to show them to Keima. He took a prototype sculpture from them and grimaced.

“The cushion’s fine. Looks great, keep making them like that. But this sculpture...? It’s not gonna work.” Tragically, Keima rejected the final result of the Succubi’s blood, sweat, and love juice. They weren’t happy about that, naturally. Especially since they liked the sculpture more than the cushion by a factor of ten.

“But why?! It’s so wonderful!”

“Yeah! It’s so... so big!”

“It’s a friggin’ giant dick!” Indeed. The wooden sculpture was a realistic carving of a massive penis. It was so realistic that when placed on the desk, it looked like the desk itself was growing a penis that pointed proudly towards the ceiling. As this is a Japanese work, it had to be covered in mosaics.

“Do you know how hard we worked to get the veins bulging like that?”

“I don’t want to know. It’s a problem specifically because it’s so realistic... Do you think kids should play with this kinda thing?” said Keima, leading to all of the Succubi (including Suilla) to imagine Michiru holding the sculpture. But they had all thought of Michiru while carving it in the first place, imaging her holding it and playing with it. That was exactly why they had shown it to Keima with such confidence.

“A heartwarming sight, to be sure.”

“Her future is bright. I’m proud of her.”

“I love it when she rubs her cheeks against it and puts it in her mouth.”

“I’m getting a nosebleed. She’s so cute, I want to eat her up!”

“Ahhhh, alright, alright. Sheesh, our culture’s just way too different.” Keima cradled his head, but he knew it was his fault for letting the Succubi work on their own terms. “Selling these would be basically announcing that you all are Succubi, so forget it.” The Succubi all gasped at Keima’s revelation. They had mostly forgotten that they were hiding their true identities.

“...Alright, looks like you understand now. Here, use this as an example,” said Keima before using DP to buy a kokeshi doll.

“This is... quite thick.”

“Could you not look at it like that? Anyway, where I’m from, sculptures look like this. Start over and copy this instead.”

The Succubi clicked their tongues and complained, but ultimately agreed and left.

After that, they did repeated retakes and finally managed to make a penis that just barely resembled a person enough for Keima to give in and accept it, both from exhaustion and from awe at the Succubi’s unexpected enthusiasm. But Keima didn’t realize. He didn’t know that the Succubi were expressing their enthusiasm for the dolls physically as well, with no concept of workplace decency holding them back.

“Th-This is just to check the quality of the dolls, that’s all! It’s important to make sure there’s no jagged edges or anything! Kids might be touching these, so!”

Their “quality checks” led to the dolls growing in popularity with a core base of fans, bringing more profit than anticipated, but... That’s another story.

Why Isn’t Keima Coming Back?!

Almost one week had passed since Keima left for Tsia. Rokuko was getting mad inside her owner's room in the Dancing Doll Inn, with Ichika nearby.

"Why isn't Keima back?!" Rokuko stomped her foot on the floor, still sitting in her chair.

"Girl, he's got his hands tied up in the quest, nothing he can do about it." Ichika on the other hand was calm. She poured a glass of tea and set it in front of Rokuko. As an adventurer, she knew that it was normal for bodyguard quests to last for several days. She didn't know what exact quest Keima had taken, but she could imagine it was something to that effect.

"...Why isn't he coming back, though? I'm starting to get lonely!" Rokuko tapped her fingers against her desk impatiently.

"Must be some kinda big deal quest. The Archduke went out of his way to call Master for it, so."

"...Grrr."

"Calmed down?"

"Uh-huh. Hey, Ichika, go check up on him."

"Dude, it'd be way faster if you just use your menu or whatever to do that."

"Oh right, I forgot I could do that." Rokuko used her menu to open the map. The green dot representing Keima was shown alongside the green dot representing Niku. However, she couldn't view them on the monitor like she could in the dungeon.

"No good. It looks like I can only see up close when they're in the dungeon. Or maybe it's just because they're too far away?"

"Yeah, figures. Oh. But doesn't that mean you saw where he was?"

"Uh-huh." She could see that he was in Tsia, at least. She took a closer look. "Wait... He's a little outside of Tsia. Did he get kicked out?"

"Nah, they definitely didn't kick him out after calling him for a quest. Where outside is he? What direction?"

"Here, I'll make the map visible. See? To the south." Keima's position was

displayed on a relatively detailed map of Tsia. Ichika peered at it.

“Ummm, pretty sure the slums are to the south of Tsia. Dude, I’m gonna laugh my ass off if they told him to just destroy the whole slums.”

“Ichika, go check on him.”

“I’d just get in his way, girl. You should probably contact him through the dungeon or something.”

“He’s too far for that. I could’ve done that if he were in the Dungeon or in a Dungeon Battle, though.”

“Dang. Still, I’m gonna say he doesn’t want us to mess with him while he’s working.”

“Ngggh, fine.” If Keima theoretically had some plan that would be ruined by Ichika popping up, sending her over would just delay his return further. Rokuko knew she was being selfish and thus dropped the subject there.

“Ichika. There’s only one thing we can do now. What’s the saying again? ‘All things come to those who sleep’? Guess we gotta sleep, then!”

“Oooh, that’s one of those Beddhist sayings. Sounds good to me, maybe you’ll wake up to a letter from him or something.”

“Right! Let’s go to Keima’s room! Be my dakimakura!” Rokuko shot up out of her chair.

“Uhhh, no thanks. I’ve got a job to do.”

“Make somebody else do it! Just hire Roppe again if you have to.” Ichika thought it was an extreme waste of money to hire a part-timer just to nap during the day. But everyone working for the [Cave of Greed] had basically been gathered by Keima to do his work while he slept. With that in mind, perhaps it wasn’t a waste of money after all.

“...Well, okie dokie. I totally don’t mind getting some early shut eye.”

“Okay, hurry! I’m gonna leave you behind!”

“Whoa! Wait up, Rokukooo!” Rokuko dashed towards Keima’s room so fast that Ichika had to run after her.

Once there, Rokuko slept with Ichika as her dakimakura. In Keima's room.

"Ahhh... Y'know, Rokuko, you smell super nice for some reason."

"It's hard to know what your own smell is like. You kinda smell like curry, Ichika... Mmnn, now I'm hungry."

As they slept in bed and waited, a letter from Keima arrived talking about an engagement. That finally pushed Rokuko past the limits of her restraint.

"Look at this, Ichika! It sounds like Keima's gotten himself in a really weird situation, and I don't like it!"

"Woah, really? Let's see here... Oooh, the Divine Pillow, huh? Guess that's what Master's after." Keima currently wanted the pieces of the Divine Bedding more than anything else. With that as bait, even Keima would get to work.

"Anyway, it looks like he's in Tsia right now. The letter made it sound like he's finished the first part of his job, more or less, so let's go check up on him!"

"Fine, fine. But we're coming home if he's busy, capisce?"

"I know that. It'll just take longer for Keima to come back if we get in the way of his work." *You're sure all about Keima now, huh?* thought Ichika, but managed to keep it to herself.

The Silkies and The Eldest Sister

Thus thought Hanna: I was Named first, therefore I am the eldest sister.

Thus thought Nicole: I stand in the middle of the ground, therefore I am the eldest sister.

Thus thought Pio: I'm fine with being the youngest sister!

"Okay, the First Elder Sister Meeting is now in sessiooon."

"Hold on, why are you taking the lead, Hanna? That's my job." An argument began the moment the meeting did. It was hard to imagine things remaining ordered for long.

"...Should I be the speaker? I'm fine with being the youngest sister, so."

“I like your attitude, Pio. But leave this to me, Hanna, your eldest sister.”

“I’m the eldest, so leave it to your good ol’ big sister Nicole.”

Nicole and Hanna glared at each other, grinding their teeth.

“Okay, let’s hold this meeting in the form of a debate. You both state your arguments, then the arbitrator makes the decision. It’s basically like an argument, but more formal.”

“Wow, I didn’t know about that,” said both Hanna and Nicole at the same time. Since they both agreed, Pio continued taking the lead.

“Okay, whoever gets two points first wins. Let’s hear your arguments.”

“Okay! I’m the eldest sister because— Hey, I get to go first!” The two of them spoke and began arguing at the exact same time. Pio sighed.

“Hanna got to start the meeting, so you can go first, Nicole.”

“Yay! Eheheheh.”

“Ngggh! But I did start the meeting, so fine!” Nicole gave a smug grin and Hanna bit her lip with frustration. *They’re both being kinda immature*, thought Pio.

“Okay, go ahead.” Pio prompted Nicole to begin and got a nod in return.

“I’m the eldest sister because when all three of us line up, I stand in the middle... In other words, I have the center position!” She puffed out her chest with needless pride. As an aside, all three of the Silkies were as flat as a board.

“Objection! What logical connection is there between the center position and being the oldest?”

“My proof rests with Lady Rei! She’s the leader of the administrators, and she was apparently in the center position when all three of them were summoned. I did my research!”

“What?! An actual logical argument from Nicole...?”

Pio nodded. Nicole had a point.

“Okay, we’ll keep that in mind. You’re next, Hanna.”

“Perfect! Just you wait, I’ll prove I’m the eldest sister!” Hanna gave a pointless cough, then began her argument. “I think I’m the eldest sister because I was Named first. We were all summoned at the same time, right? That makes us triplets from a human’s perspective. But we didn’t come out in order like humans do, so I think seniority should be determined by the order in which we were named!”

“Objection! Master summoned us, but Ichika named us! That means the order doesn’t matter!”

“Overruled. Ichika was instructed by Master to name us, so Hanna’s logic remains valid.”

“What?! Pio, whose side are you on?!” Nicole was thrown off by Pio’s lack of support.

“I’m the arbitrator, so I’m not on anybody’s side. I’m neutral.”

“Uh-huh, and Pio’s right! Just accept that you’re my little sister, Nicole.”

“Well, that’s one point to Hanna. Let’s continue.”

“Wait. That didn’t prove I’m the eldest sister?” Hanna tilted her head in confusion.

“Sometimes names are given starting with the youngest. For example, Ichika is older than Niku, but apparently Niku was named first. I can only give you one point.”

“I see. But that still puts me in the lead!” Incidentally, if Hanna had argued that Niku and Ichika weren’t siblings, she could have gotten another point. Alas, she didn’t stick the landing as well as she could have.

“Okay, moving on. Do either of you have something to say to the other? Raise your hand if you do.”

“I do!” They both raised their hands almost simultaneously, but Nicole was a little faster.

“Hanna, didn’t you say this was the ‘First’ meeting about this? I bet that was you setting it up such that if you lost here, you could keep holding second, third, and so on meetings until you won. Basically, you accepted that you might

not be the eldest sister.”

“N-No I didn’t! I just wanted to give you some hope, Nicole.”

“If I have hope, that means I am the eldest, doesn’t it?”

“Ngggh...” Nicole was basically using pure sophistry, fallacious logic that only sounded right on the outside. But since Hanna let herself get argued into a corner, Pio did what she had to as arbitrator.

“One point to Nicole. Now you both have one point.”

“Yay!”

“Ngh! You’ve caught up to me, but I’m still the eldest sister.”

“Okay, you raised your hand to talk too, Hanna. What did you have in mind?” Hanna gave a cute smile, then took something out of her {Storage}.

“...Heheh. The truth is, I have a purin!”

“A purin!” shouted both Pio and Nicole.

“This is from dessert last night. I’m the eldest sister, so I stopped myself from eating it! And I’ve continued to hold back from eating it! So basically! I’m mature! I’m the eldest sister!” Hanna gave a smug grin.

“N-No way, Hanna, you’ve been preparing for this since yesterday?”

“Eheheh, so? Only the eldest sister could pull something like this off, right? Pio! Your decision!”

“I see... This certainly does give you a strong elder sister image. Okay. If you can share that purin among your younger sisters, you’ll be universally recognized as the eldest sister.”

“That’s fair. Let’s get along as younger sisters, Pio.”

Pio and Nicole held their hands out for the purin.

“.....” And so, Hanna ran away. With the purin.

“Hey, she’s running away!”

“Catch heeer!”

In the end, it was never decided who among them was the eldest sister.

Atelier Leona? The Alchemist With Nothing But Cheats

“Mhmmhmmhmmhmm, mhmmhmmhmmmm.” Leona headed to Tsia while humming and picking up rocks. Incidentally, she had taken off her nun outfit and replaced it with a pair of magician-esque robes. Or well, the belt with test tubes on it made her look more like an alchemist, and the pointed hat on her head was unmistakably that of a witch, but still. Off she went.

After leaving the [Cave of Greed] and her Succubi behind, Leona had nothing tying her down. She started to wonder where she could go to have some fun, but upon opening the clasped purse in her chest pocket, she saw that she had only a few coppers. In truth, she could pull out a practically infinite amount of money from her {Wallet}, but she got the urge to roleplay being poor for a bit.

“{Ultra Alchemy}, {Ultra Alchemy}, {Ultra Alchemy}. Oh, and one more {Ultra Alchemy}, just for fun.” She changed the stones she had picked up into Alchemist Stones. Anyone wise in the ways of the world would take one look at the red, gem-like stones and realize they were more valuable than an orichalcum ingot of the same size. But to Leona they had no more value than large pieces of candy she could eat as much as she wanted.

“Ahhh, it looks like I dropped my money. Do you mind if I pay the entry fee with this rock?”

“...A gemstone? I don’t know if this is gonna be enough. Got any more?” asked the guard, so Leona put four more rocks on his hand. “Well, that’s probably not enough, but alright. You can go in.” The south gate of Tsia was less well-guarded than the others, and Leona earned her way in by giving the guard (who was not wise in the ways of the world) Philosopher Stones. He didn’t even check for ID, maybe thanks to her having given five of them.

Incidentally, just for fun, Leona put a time limit on the Philosopher Stones that turned them back to rocks after enough time. The guard was probably right when he said they weren’t worth as much as the entry fee, but he already said she could go inside.

Now. She was in Tsia, but how best to make money? Leona could make money out of practically thin air if she wanted. But that wouldn’t be fun. So, she

decided to make drugs instead. With that in mind, she walked to the nearest inn to get a room. Working while walking around was just a real drag.

“Umm, can I pay with gems?”

“Hm? Ah, an adventurer. Sure... but uh, what kind of gems are these?”

“Mmmm, rocks I picked up?”

“Hmm. Well, these’ll be good for today. I’ll have the jeweler next door take a look at them. I’ll give you change back if they’re worth too much. But don’t worry, they’ll still cover your room for today even if they aren’t worth enough.”

“Oh, don’t worry about change. I just found them on the ground, I’m sure they aren’t worth too much.”

“You sure? Alright then, I’ll keep them. As thanks, I’ll throw in food for free.”

“Okay, then I’ll give you another for free.” As an aside, these Philosopher Stones didn’t have any time limit like the ones she gave to the soldier. Why? No reason, of course.

Leona got to work making drugs in her room immediately.

“{Water Cup}, {Ultra Alchemy}, {Ultra Alchemy}.” She filled an empty potion bottle with water, then melted in Philosopher Stones using Ultra Alchemy. Thus completed the [Elixir]. [Elixirs] were a magical drug that could even cure aging itself. A single one of them was worth more than the budget of an entire small country. But Leona kept going with {Ultra Alchemy} .

The result was a gender-disturbing [Futanaruu (Undiluted)]. By drinking this one would become a male-female hybrid known as a futanari, thereby introducing more chaos to the world.

“This stuff’s too strong undiluted, so I’ll mix it in with some random potions, and... done!” Thus in a matter of minutes she created twenty [Futanaruu] potions that would each last a year once drunk. She used twenty-two Philosophers Stones in the process. Two for making the [Futanaruu], twenty for turning into random potions. Though in the end they all came from the same stuff (rocks she found on the ground).

“Now I just need to sell these to an item store and I’m done! Ahhh, I sure love

easy money.” Incidentally, the food tasted just okay. It was overwhelmingly worse than what Keima served in his Dancing Doll Inn, but well, it wasn’t fair to compare anything to his stuff.

The next day, she went to an item store to sell the drugs.

“Welcome.”

“Yes, hello. I want to sell these drugs.”

“Ahhh, you’re an alchemist? We can settle on a price after I see what you’re selling.”

Leona went ahead and put the the twenty [Futanaruu] potions onto the counter. The second he saw them, the store owner’s eyes widened.

“...I-I’ll buy them. Please let me buy them. I’ll go open my safe, please wait just a moment.”

“Oh, you have drug identification skill? That speeds this up.” Leona stealthily used her {Ultra Identification} skill and saw that he had a skill just strong enough to identify the effects of potions. Before long, he returned with a bag filled with gold coins.

“...I’m sorry, this is all I have in the safe right now. I’ll take three.”

“Sure, okay. That’s fine with me.” For a second Leona wondered about what she should do with the other seventeen, but as the bag of golds was more than enough money for now, she decided to dump the rest into the next toilet she saw. They were drugs she could make an infinite amount of, after all, thanks to her skills.

And so, Leona continued her journey without experiencing any money problems whatsoever.









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by Supana Onikage

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